

# Emergency assistance for horse owners

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NSW Department of Primary Industries and the Australian Horse Industry Council (AHIC)

NSW DPI is responsible for responding to all emergencies in NSW that involve agriculture and animals, including horses. The control and coordination arrangements for the use of all agricultural resources in response to the impact and effects of any emergency are contained in the [State Agricultural & Animal Services Functional Area Supporting Plan](#).

The Australian Horse Industry Council (AHIC) is a supporting organisation to NSW DPI and provides appropriate resources, technical and specialist advice and support to the horse industry during an emergency event. One recent example is AHIC's participation in the recent equine influenza outbreak of 2007–08.

## Who is the AHIC?

The AHIC is a national representative body, serving the Australian horse industry. The main role of the AHIC is to provide a voice for the interests of all horse owners in national forums. Particular issues that are a focus of AHIC activities include horse health and welfare, personal safety and any other issues that can have widespread effects across the horse industry. The AHIC operates through voluntary services of elected Directors and Trustees, and the expertise of individuals co-opted on to sub-committees. Financial support of AHIC activities is provided by annual subscriptions from horse industry organisations and individuals. Funding is also obtained through grants for individual projects.

## Why is AHIC needed?

The Australian horse industry includes many diverse groups. The issues that affect these groups may be unique to a particular sector, or alternatively, they may have widespread effects. Those issues that can have widespread effects are more efficiently and effectively addressed by a single body, rather than by a multitude of organisations. The AHIC, in conjunction with State Horse Councils, aims to address these common issues.

## Activity areas

The following areas are the focus of AHIC activity. The Horse Emergency Contact Database and the HorseSafe Code of Practice are recent AHIC projects.

### Horse health and welfare

- Quarantine and Health Committee
- Horse Emergency Contact Database
- Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement
- Biosecurity Awareness
- National Horse Welfare Code.

### Industry representation

- Animal Health Australia
- AQIS
- Commonwealth and State Governments
- Dissemination of Information
- Promotion of Research and Development
- International Liaison
- Access to Riding Areas
- Promotion of Horse Activities
- Corporate Communications
- Insurance.

### Service Programs

- HorseSafe Committee
- National Code of Practice
- HorseSafe Accreditation Scheme
- Horse Emergency Contact Database.

## What can you do?

To help the horse industry be effectively represented it needs to be united. This will occur if AHIC has widespread industry support. To develop this support the AHIC asks that you or your organisation contact the AHIC directly and/or visit the website to learn more about issues facing horse owners and riders throughout Australia. This can also include joining or renewing your membership with the AHIC and encouraging others to do the same.

## HorseSafe Code of Practice

The AHIC HorseSafe Code of Practice is aimed at implementing minimum safety standards across the horse industry. These standards relate only to the safety of riders, participants and spectators and do not cover other risks.



## How to get accredited

The HorseSafe Code of Practice has both technical and administrative requirements that need to be complied with.

### Technical requirements

- Legislation
- Horse and rider equipment
- Premises
- Horses
- Staff
- Operations.

### Administrative requirements

- Code of Ethics
- Complaints handling
- Document control.

In order to obtain (and retain) accreditation, organisations and individuals must comply with the HorseSafe Code of Practice.

For more information regarding HorseSafe accreditation go to [www.horsecouncil.org.au](http://www.horsecouncil.org.au) or contact the AHIC National Office.

## Horse Emergency Contact Database (HECD)

This database of emergency contact details can convey information to organisations or individuals in times of emergency using fax, email or SMS.

### The problem

Emergency management organisations have difficulty coordinating services to horse people in times of emergency. This results in unnecessary risk to welfare of horses, inefficient use of emergency resources and potential risk to human life. The situation is caused by the fragmented nature of the horse industry with its multitude of organisations and interests. Compounding the problem, many horse people have no affiliations.

### The solution

This internet-based database contains the contact details of organisations or individuals. Organisations indicate the geographic area covered, the number of members and the number of horses affiliated. Individuals advise the number of horses and where they are located. A password system allows the data to be modified.

### What types of emergencies are covered?

Bushfires are the most common emergency where emergency authorities have trouble with horses. Recent fires in Canberra and around Sydney caused the deaths of many horses. Other threats are floods, disease outbreaks and seasonal problems such as plant or botulism poisoning.

Registering your details on the HECD will help to protect the health and welfare of your horses. In an emergency there will be times when authorities need

to contact horse owners. It may be a fire, flood or a disease outbreak. Until now there has been no simple way to do this.

The HECD is funded by the Federal Government, NSW DPI and NSW Office of Emergency Services under the Natural Disaster Mitigation Program to provide a contact database for all horse owners.

The HECD will provide:

- SMS alerts to your mobile phone if there is an emergency,
- seasonal bulletins and information, and
- newsletters from the AHIC about industry-wide issues.

The horse industry has a large informal network from which people get information. To assist the availability of information in an emergency we encourage horse organisations and service providers to register on the HECD so that they can be kept informed and be able to assist their members or clients.

As an additional benefit for the horse industry, organisations and service providers can have their contact details made available on the internet.

Our privacy provisions require that we only make your personal or contact information available to outside bodies for the purposes of contact in emergencies. The data may be used to map the location of horses for emergency planning purposes.

For more information on the HECD, visit our website or contact the AHIC National Office.

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