# Horse suitability assessment tool

**Note**: the activities listed are the minimum requirement for a horse to be deemed suitable for use in a school environment. It may be appropriate for a horse to be introduced to a school if one or more of the activities are unsatisfactory, however, this is at the school principal’s discretion after seeking advice from the equine manager or coach. This should only be considered after the rider’s ability is assessed.

This horse suitability assessment tool is used to determine the suitability of horses used at school. The tool can be applied to horses owned by students or the school.

**The assessment is made up of 2 processes**:

* The owner or vendor completes background and health information, and the behaviour and handling assessment before the horse is delivered to the school.
* A staff member with relevant coaching accreditation and experience or a freelance professional coach, completes the behaviour and handling assessment based on observation of the horse and rider completing activities using the school facilities.

## Activities

* The assessment must be completed each time the horse is removed from the school for more than 7 days, including over a school holiday break.
* A horse biosecurity declaration and relevant travel documents must be completed each and every time a horse is introduced or reintroduced to the school.
* For schools purchasing horses – horse suitability must be assessed prior to purchase.
* For students supplying their own horse, suitability must be assessed as soon as practical after a horse arrives at the school.
* Horse behaviour must be monitored while the horse is at the school. Any behaviour issues must be resolved, or the horse removed from the school site.

## Horse background

This section **must** be completed:

* prior to the horse arriving at the school for the first time or if it has been off site for more than 7 days
* by the student, owner or vendor, and reviewed by a teacher with appropriate qualifications or a freelance professional coach.

### Identification

Table 1 – horse background identification

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Feature | Detail |
| Horse name |  |
| Owner/vendor |  |
| Owner/vendor contact details (address and phone number) |  |
| Address where horse previously/currently kept(include Property Identification Code [PIC]) |  |
| Proposed arrival date |  |
| Proposed departure date |  |
| Colour/distinctive markings |  |
| Height |  |
| Age |  |
| Breed |  |
| Gender |  |
| Registrations |  |
| Microchip |  |
| Brands Near Side (NS) |  |
| Brands Off Side (OS) |  |

### Identification diagram

Please fill out the horse identification diagram below:

Figure 1 – Horse diagram



### Health history

Table 2 – health history of a horse

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Property | Detail |
| Weight/Body condition score (1–5) on arrival |  |
| Regular veterinarian contact details (include address and phone number) |  |
| Vaccination/Treatment status (include date administered) |  |
| Tetanus |  |
| Strangles |  |
| Hendra |  |
| Drenching (include brand used) |  |
| Allergies (describe any preventative measures/medications) |  |
| Last dental check by veterinarian or equine dentist |  |
| Last farrier date |  |
| Is the horse shod or trimmed? |  |
| Has the horse had major recent injuries? (provide details, including rehabilitation) |  |
| Any results/findings from recent veterinary checks which may affect management and/or exercise regime |  |
| Vices (for example, cribbing, weaving, windsucking) |  |

### Horse history

Table 3 – horse history

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Observed activity | Circle response | Comments |
| Stabling |  |  |
| Has the horse been mostly paddocked, stabled or yarded? | PaddockedStabledYarded |  |
| Does the horse prefer to be paddocked with other horses or in an individual paddock? | With othersIndividually |  |
| Is there any reason the horse cannot be kept in either a paddock or a stable? | YesNo |  |
| Husbandry |  |  |
| Is the horse well-behaved for the farrier to trim/shoe it? | YesNo | If no, please provide comment |
| Is the horse easily manageable when administering oral medications/drenches? | YesNo |  |
| Is the horse easily manageable when administering injections? | YesNo |  |
| Education |  |  |
| Is the horse of a suitable level of education for its proposed handler’s ability? This includes both ridden and on the ground in a range of situations | YesNo |  |

## Behaviour and handling

The assessment **must** be completed for horses intended for use in school and must be repeated if the horse has been off the school site for 7 days or more.

### Student owned horses

After a satisfactory assessment by the student or owner, the student must be observed using the school facilities to complete the activities below by a teacher with relevant qualifications or a freelance professional coach.

### Horses assessed for purchase or lease

A teacher with relevant qualifications or a freelance professional coach should complete the assessment themselves using the school’s facilities.

### Behaviour and handling assessment

Table 4 – assessment for behaviour and handling of a horse

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Observed activity | Circle response | Comments(Completed by student, owner or vendor prior to delivery) | Circle response | Comments(Completed by teacher with relevant qualifications or coach using school facilities) |
| Load and unload the horse |  |  |  |  |
| Does the horse load and unload easily and travel well on a float or truck? | YesNo |  | YesNo |  |
| Specify preferred method (straight load, angle or truck). | StraightAngleTruck |  | StraightAngleTruck |  |
| Catch the horse |  |  |  |  |
| Can the horse be caught quickly and easily in a paddock, yard and stable? | YesNo |  | YesNo |  |
| Lead the horse |  |  |  |  |
| Does the horse lead calmly, safely and obediently? | YesNo |  | YesNo |  |
| Tie up horse on cross ties and rail |  |  |  |  |
| Can the horse be tied up for a 10-minute period or more without pulling back, becoming stressed, moving around excessively, putting the owner or other horses in danger? | YesNo |  | YesNo |  |
| Grooming |  |  |  |  |
| Will the horse stand tied up to be groomed all over, including head, legs, belly and ears? | YesNo |  | YesNo |  |
| Does the horse easily and safely pick up and hold up each of its 4 feet to be cleaned out? | YesNo |  | YesNo |  |
| Is the horse used to being rugged? Can rugs be put on safely? | YesNo |  | YesNo |  |
| Can the horse be hosed and washed in all areas of its body? | YesNo |  | YesNo |  |
| Husbandry |  |  |  |  |
| Can the horse’s temperature be taken safely? | YesNo |  | YesNo |  |
| Education |  |  |  |  |
| Can the horse be lunged in a large area? | YesNo |  | YesNo |  |
| Can the horse be lunged in a round yard? | YesNo |  | YesNo |  |
| Is the horse of a suitable level of education for its proposed handler’s ability? This includes both ridden and on the ground in a range of situations | YesNo |  | YesNo |  |
| Behaviour |  |  |  |  |
| Does the horse show signs of aggression towards the handler? | YesNo |  | YesNo |  |
| Does the horse show signs of aggression towards another horse? | YesNo |  | YesNo |  |
| Does the horse display unusual behaviours or have behaviour that make it difficult to manage? For example, kicking, biting, pulling back, weaving, anxiety, pawing, separation anxiety | YesNo |  | YesNo |  |
| Saddling and riding |  |  |  |  |
| Does the horse accept the required equipment and saddlery needed to be ridden? For example, boots, saddle, bridle | YesNo |  | YesNo |  |
| What is the quality of basic flatwork in an enclosed arena as an individual? | HighSatisfactoryLow |  | HighSatisfactoryLow |  |
| What is the quality of basic flat work in an open space as an individual? | HighSatisfactoryLow |  | HighSatisfactoryLow |  |
| What is the quality of basic flatwork in an enclosed arena with over 3 horses? | HighSatisfactoryLow |  | HighSatisfactoryLow |  |
| What is the quality of basic flat work in an open space with over 3 horses? | HighSatisfactoryLow |  | HighSatisfactoryLow |  |
| What is the quality of trail riding or farm riding individually? | HighSatisfactoryLow |  | HighSatisfactoryLow |  |
| What is the quality of trail riding or farm riding over 3 horses? | HighSatisfactoryLow |  | HighSatisfactoryLow |  |
| What is the quality of one-rein emergency stop in an enclosed arena? | HighSatisfactoryLow |  | HighSatisfactoryLow |  |
| What is the quality of one-rein emergency stop in an open space? | HighSatisfactoryLow |  | HighSatisfactoryLow |  |
| Loud noises (including vehicles, doors and gates slamming) |  |  |  |  |
| Does the horse react dangerously while ridden in an enclosed space? | YesNo |  | YesNo |  |
| Does the horse react dangerously while ridden in an open space? | YesNo |  | YesNo |  |
| Inclement weather (including rain, wind and thunder) |  |  |  |  |
| Does the horse react dangerously while in stables/yards? | YesNo |  | YesNo |  |
| Does the horse react dangerously while being ridden? | YesNo |  | YesNo |  |

### Rider assessment

This section **must** be completed by a staff member with relevant coaching accreditation or a freelance professional coach with relevant qualifications to determine the skill level of the students to complete the intended equine activity.

Principals have duties under the Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act 2011 (NSW) to ensure the health and wellbeing of workers and those affected by the work activities (such as students and visitors). Where a rider or handler is ‘new or inexperienced’ (that is, if they have no or minimal knowledge or skill gained from interacting with horses or, in some circumstances, where there has been a significant change in duties) they should comply with the SafeWork NSW approved [*Code of Practice: Managing Risks when New or Inexperienced Riders or Handlers Interact with Horses in the Workplace* [PDF 341 KB]](https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/79160/SW08262-Code-of-Practice-Managing-risks-when-new-or-inexperienced-riders-or-handlers-interact-with-horses-in-the-workplace.pdf)*.*

Table 5 – assessing a rider’s skill level

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Intended disciplines and activities intended for the horse | Suitability of horse for this activity | Rider level required for this activity on this horse |
| Dressage |  |  |
| Jumping |  |  |
| Campdrafting |  |  |
| Recreational riding |  |  |
| Riding school horse for school use |  |  |
| Other |  |  |

## Declarations

### Owner or vendor

I have completed the assessment of the horse described above truthfully and to the best of my knowledge.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Signature: |  |
| Print name: |  |
| Date: |  |

### School assessor

I have completed the assessment of the horse described above truthfully and to the best of my knowledge.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Qualifications: |  |
| Signature: |  |
| Print name: |  |
| Date: |  |

### Principal

I am satisfied that the horse suitability has been assessed appropriately and approve the use of the horse at school.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Signature: |  |
| Print name: |  |
| Date: |  |

## References

Equestrian Australia (2023) [*Equestrian Australia*](https://www.equestrian.org.au/) [website], accessed 1 February 2023.

State of New South Wales (Department of Education), Catholic Schools NSW and the Association of Independent Schools of NSW (n.d.) ‘[Animals in Schools](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/animals-in-schools)’, Teaching and learning, NSW Department of Education website, accessed 1 February 2023.

State of New South Wales (NSW Agriculture) (1996) ‘[NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No 3 – Horses in riding centres and boarding stables](https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/animal-welfare/animal-care-and-welfare/other/companion-animal-files/nsw-animal-welfare-code-of-practice-no-3-horses-in-riding-centres-and-boarding-stables)’, Dogs, cats, horses and other pets, NSW Department of Primary Industries website, accessed 1 February 2023.

State of New South Wales (SafeWork NSW) (n.d.) [*Working Safely with Horses* [142 KB]](https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/54587/SW08414-Working-safely-with-horses-.pdf), SafeWork NSW, accessed 1 February 2023.

State of New South Wales (SafeWork NSW) (2017) [*Code of Practice: Managing Risks when New or Inexperienced Riders or Handlers Interact with Horses in the Workplace* [PDF 341 KB]](https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/79160/SW08262-Code-of-Practice-Managing-risks-when-new-or-inexperienced-riders-or-handlers-interact-with-horses-in-the-workplace.pdf), SafeWork NSW, accessed 1 February 2023.

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