

27 March 2020

COVID-19 Alert Level 4 – Updated Order and Direction – MPI Guidelines Regarding the Care of Horses as an Essential Activity

MPI has clarified late yesterday their expectations regarding the feeding, care and exercise of horses, while New Zealand is on Alert Level 4. Specifically, the Manager of the MPI Animal Welfare has said via email, *“we would be urging all horses to be agisted in order to lower the risk of spread – we understand this is happening already. I hope we can take care of this through the registration process, but I wanted to make sure it is clear”*

The updated Order and Direction reflects this new advice and it is imperative that all licensees understand the importance of adhering to this directive. The Order and Direction is updated as follows,

- 1.0 Whilst this Directive includes within its provisions the ability to exercise horses, this is permitted only where it is needed to ensure the continued welfare of the horse.
- 2.0 Light exercise of a horse is permitted only when:
 - 2.1 The trainer is unable to identify a suitable agistment property or spelling paddock for the horse with that has capability to accept the horse. Relocation of horses to an agistment property is permitted within clause 12);
 - 2.2 The horse is boxed, or is contained in a small paddock or yard due to there being no suitable yards or paddocks on the trainer’s facility; and
 - 2.3 The stable lacks a horse walker or treadmill.
- 3.0 If light exercise is justified to ensure the continued welfare of a horse, the trainer must ensure that fast work is not undertaken.
- 4.0 Breaking, gaiting, and education of young horses is not a permitted activity, unless required to protect the safety of the young horse or staff.

Clearly, this new development will mean that racing will not resume until sometime after the Alert Level 4 is lifted by the Government. We understand the impact that this will have on everyone associated with harness racing. The thoroughbred code is equally affected.

The communication shared with you on Wednesday on this issue was done so in good faith and with all the information we had to hand, however the situation, which is not one of any of our making, has now changed and we implore all licensees to comply.

A reminder that any business who intends to have employees coming to their property (on the basis they cannot find suitable spelling arrangements for all horses) must, as previously advised, register with MPI by 5pm today.

Should you require any clarification of any of the above, please contact Darrin Williams, Liz Bishop or Peter Jensen at HRNZ.