

Hot Weather Policy



Introduction

This policy has been developed to:

- Raise awareness throughout the Pegasus community about the issues associated with riding and/or competing unmounted classes or training activities in hot and humid conditions.
- Provide information so that coaches, staff, volunteers, parents and participants can take steps to minimise the extra risks that arise when exercising in hot weather.
- Ensure that class coaches and staff know whether a class or training should be modified or cancelled and when it is safe to participate in the heat.

It is the responsibility of Pegasus staff, coaches, volunteers, parents/guardians and other relevant individuals to read and understand this policy and seek further clarification from Pegasus as required.

RDA Participants and Hot Weather

Children are especially at risk in hot weather. Prior to puberty, a child's sweating mechanism, which is essential for effective cooling of the body, is poorly developed. Also, a child's ratio between weight and surface area is such that the body absorbs heat rapidly. Sensible measures, as outlined in this policy, need to be taken to protect Riders from over-exertion in hot weather.

What is a Heat Illness?

Some common signs of heat illness that may be seen in Pegasus participants are outlined below:

- Dizziness (light headedness).
- Complaining of being hot and appearing distressed.
- Appearing exhausted or weak (fatigued); needing help to stand.
- Stumbling, unsteady, clumsy, falling.

- Collapse – inability to stand, or altered consciousness ranging from confusion, drowsiness through to unconsciousness.

Treatment of a Heat Illness

Participants who show any signs of a heat illness should be stopped and removed from the activity immediately.

- Lay the rider or participant down to rest in a cool shaded area with some air circulation.
- Raise the legs and pelvis if possible.
- Remove helmet and any excess clothing.
- Cool the person by wetting, misting or spraying the skin with water and fanning vigorously.
- Apply ice packs to the neck, armpits and groin.
- Give them cool water if they are conscious.

If the person does not quickly recover and remains seriously ill, confused, vomiting or shows signs of altered consciousness, call an ambulance immediately and seek medical help.

Continue cooling the person.

Horses and Hot Weather

Heat stress occurs when horses are exposed to excessively hot or humid conditions. Like humans, horses sweat to get rid of surplus body heat. When the horse is unable to shed excess body heat, the body temperature rises quickly, causing severe (and sometimes fatal) health problems.

Signs of heat stress in horses

- Restlessness/lethargy/agitation
- Rapid pulse and breathing
- Heavy breathing/panting
- Increased sweating
- Excessive salivation
- Redness of the tongue / oral area
- High body temperature
- Erratic heart beat
- Muscle spasms
- Stumbling gait

- Collapse.

Management of Hot Weather Conditions at Pegasus

Heat illness can affect riders, participants, coaches, volunteers and horses, therefore the below strategies should be implemented to mitigate heat illness and manage incidents.

1. Education

Opportunities should be taken to educate staff, volunteers, participants and parents/guardians about the importance of sun safety, avoiding dehydration and managing hot weather conditions. Such messages should be regularly reinforced.

2. Preparation

It is recommended that if hot weather is likely to occur that coaches and staff should ensure that proactive measures are taken to cope with the anticipated conditions. These may include:

- Planning for the lessons to take place in shade and out of direct sunlight
- Planning for unmounted training to take place inside where possible

3. Attire

- All riders and participants should wear sun safe attire. Clothing should be light-coloured, light weight, loose fitting and well ventilated to allow easy evaporation of sweat from the skin. It should also provide adequate protection from the sun.
- All staff, coaches and volunteers must be seen to be setting a sun smart example. During activities, they are encouraged to wear sun safe shirts, hats and sunglasses.

4. Sunscreen

Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that their child applies sufficient amounts of sunscreen to protect them whilst they are involved in Pegasus activities.

Sunscreen will also be provided and located in and around Pegasus premises.

5. Other

In hot weather the following individuals may be at increased risk of heat related illness, and appropriate precautions should be implemented, and their condition monitored on a frequent basis. The group includes those that:

- Have recently been ill. Participants who have experienced a high temperature, infection, diarrhoea or vomiting should not participate and should be taken home.

- Have a medical condition that that may predispose them to heat illness such as cystic fibrosis, diabetes, heart conditions, epilepsy etc.

In hot weather, parents and guardians of participants at increased risk should carefully consider whether or not it is appropriate for the rider to be participating in lessons.

Cancellation of Lessons due to Hot Weather

The following outlines the temperatures at which Pegasus lessons or training activities must be altered or cancelled.

- Pegasus will have equipment that measures both ambient temperatures and humidity levels.
- At 31 degrees Celsius and when humidity exceeds 50%, *consideration* should be given to postponing class until it becomes cooler. If class cannot be postponed consider altering the class or cancelling.
- If the ambient temperature exceeds 35 degrees, or is *reliably forecast* to exceed 35 degrees, classes, lessons and activities *must* be altered or cancelled. This is for the wellbeing and comfort of the riders, coaches, volunteers and horses.