2016 Horse Welfare –
Code of Practice

As the 2015 polocrosse season commences, it is timely to distribute some information relating to Horse Welfare within our sport…

1. Grounds should be adequately fenced and have gates that can be easily closed, so that stock proofing can be obtained quickly.
2. Playing fields shall be free of holes, rocks and other obstacles.
3. Adequate horse stalls shall be provided.
4. For all tournaments, a Registered Veterinarian must either be in attendance, or on call at short notice.
5. A stimulant substance should not be administered to, or provided for horses participating in polocrosse.
6. Horses’ tails shall be plaited, and be fastened in a manner such, as to ensure they do not come undone during play No tape to be used. Cable/zip ties are banned.
7. Bits and gear must be prescribed in the Polocrosse Rules of the Polocrosse Association of Ireland.
8. Horses are to be prevented disease free at a polocrosse competition. Club horse welfare officers need to be proactive in monitoring horses within their club and if necessary involve the relevant horse welfare officer and follow the code of practice in place if the situation should arise.
9. All equipment must meet minimum safety standards as prescribed in the Polocrosse Rules of the Polocrosse Association of Ireland.
10. Whips shall be of flexible construction
* Be free of wire or other dangerous materials
* e up to a maximum length of 100 centimeters
* Must have a full flap no longer than 5 centimeters
1. Any animal seriously injured on the field shall be removed by conveyance.
2. A conveyance suitable for this procedure shall be available at all times during play.
3. When it is necessary for a horse to be destroyed on the field, a mobile screen shall be placed around the animal prior to it being destroyed and shall remain in place until such time as it allows for the destroyed animal to be loaded for transportation from the area.
4. All horses should be fed and exercised properly for the standard of polocrosse they will be playing.
5. Horses should be well shod at all tournaments and practices.
6. Horses must have access to clean water at all times.
7. Horses should be properly cared for at the end of each match. E.g. Hosing down, rugging etc.
8. If there are long breaks between games, horses should be unbandaged and rebandaged for the next game.
9. After a day’s play all horses shall:
* Have their tails undone.
* Have all bandages removed (those used for health purposes are exempt)
* Have all bell boots removed.
* Be supplied with sufficient food and clean water.
* Have their stalls made secure.
* Have any illness or injury attended to.
* Be suitably rugged.
* Horses must have sufficient room and an appropriate surface in their yards to be able to lie down.

Flu Vaccination – We recommend that all horses travelling to tournaments have their up-to-date flu vaccinations.

Umpires –

* Rules exist for the protection of our horses on the field. All umpires should be familiar with the rulebook and the rules and recommendations that are specifically included and designed to ensure the on field safety of the horse & rider.
* Umpires should be able to recognise any form of stress being placed on a horse (fatigue, whip, spurs & lameness) and appropriate action should be taken immediately.
* An umpire who can read a game and sees that a dangerous accident may occur should blow the whistle before it occurs. This is “preventative umpiring’ and can save both player and horse from serious injury.

Dangerous Riding – No player should ride dangerously, for example…

* Bumping at an angle dangerous to a player or horse.
* Bumping at sufficient force to dislodge a horse from its line of travel.
* Pulling over a horse’s forelegs in a manner as to risk tripping the horse.
* Pushing across a horse’s loins or neck.
* Riding off is allowed providing that contact is made with the horses facing the same direction and pushing shoulder to shoulder.
* No player shall swing a racket wildly so as to intimidate another horse or rider.

Horse Abuse – Should be reported through the appropriate channels and will be dealt with  according to the rule book. (for example: Set Penalties).

**PENALTY 1**
*Negotiation.* Horse Welfare Officer speaks to the offending person & negotiates a plan of action to overcome the problem.

**PENALTY 2**
 This follows a penalty 1 where the plan of action is not being followed.

A] HWO may explain the plan again  OR

B] If HWO believes there is no attempt by the  offender to rectify the situation he/ she will advise the offender through the club body that they will be stood down until the remedial plan is put in place and is working.

**PENALTY 3**
Occurs in emergency situation where the HWO has no time to speak to other officials. The HWO will explain to the offender what he/she sees as the problem and stand horse down from match and any other matches until problem is solved. The HWO will report the problem & action taken to officials, at an appropriate time, to endorse action taken.

**PENALTY 4**
Person continually breaks the horse welfare code. E.g. Horses never fed properly; continually left without water or anything that would affect the well being of the horse. The club will convene a meeting with the offender present and, after hearing evidence, decide on a suitable punishment which may include standing the offender down, fining or banning.

**PENALTY 5**
This occurs when something happens that is not covered by the above situations. The horse welfare officer has the right to stop a horse playing or umpiring when it is not in the best interest of the horse. Appropriate penalties will be applied later.

**CONCLUSION**Although the horse welfare officers are elected to oversee the welfare of horses, horse welfare is everyone’s concern. Everyone should ensure they follow the horse welfare code with their horses as issues often arise due to ignorance rather than intent and also ensure that we bring to the attention of Horse Welfare Officers any breaches of the code that are seen.