



EQUESTRIAN
AUSTRALIA

Sensory Hairs

GUIDE FOR OFFICIALS

FOR ALL EQUESTRIAN AUSTRALIA DISCIPLINES



AUGUST 2022

SENSORY HAIR INFORMATION FOR OFFICIALS

Effective 1st of July 2022, the following addition has been included in the Equestrian Australia General Regulations (GRs):

Chapter VI Protection of Athletes and Horses

Article 141 - Protection of Horses

- In cases of a Horse's illness or injury during an Event the Ground Jury will decide, after consulting the Veterinary Delegate or Commission, whether the Horse may continue in that or subsequent Competitions.
- A **Horse's sensory hairs may not be clipped and/or shaven or otherwise modified in any way** under penalty of elimination from the event. Individual sensory hairs may be removed by a veterinarian to prevent pain or discomfort for the Horse. Areas of hair that must be clipped, shaven or removed to allow veterinary treatment are exempt from this rule.
- A phase in period of six months is being introduced to ensure horses are competing with sensory hairs. From 1st July 2022, horses found competing with clipped/shaven/otherwise modified sensory hairs will be issued a **recorded warning**. From 1st January 2023, horses found competing with clipped/shaven/otherwise modified sensory hairs will be **eliminated from the event**.

Per Article 99 of the General Regulations:

- Sport Rules and Special Regulations must be read in conjunction with the GRs. In cases of conflict of interpretation between the provisions of the Sport Rules or Special Regulations, the principles of the GRs will take precedence.
- In cases of doubt about the interpretation of Articles or their application to particular circumstances, OCs should obtain a ruling from the EA National Office.



EQUESTRIAN
AUSTRALIA



What are Sensory Hairs?

Horses have special tactile sensory hairs, known as their whiskers. The whiskers on a horse play an important role in their sensory awareness system. These amazing sensory hairs have their own nerve and blood supply and help horses navigate their surroundings.

Location and purpose of Sensory Hairs

Sensory Hairs are a coarse hair-like structure found around the horse's eyes and muzzle. The purpose of sensory hairs, both around the eyes and muzzle, is to provide sensory feedback on the horse's environment and surroundings. The length of the sensory hairs determines the safe distance from unfamiliar objects, compensating for the blind spots a horse has in front of its face and underneath its nose. In fact, many times the only information a horse receives about what is happening in these areas is provided through its sensory hairs. As well as this, they also enable the horse to understand unfamiliar characteristics of food or detect small inedible objects.

The sensory hairs present on both upper and lower eyelids provide an automatic blink response when they encounter something like a fly or contact with an object which helps protect the eye itself.

Equestrian Australia advises that sensory hairs located around the mouth, nose and eyes are an important sensory organ for the horse and should not be removed for cosmetic purposes. The hair inside the horses ears are not considered Sensory Hairs and may be trimmed.



EQUESTRIAN
AUSTRALIA

FAQS

Who must abide by this rule?

The EA GRs, Sport Rules and Special Regulations apply to equestrian Events and/or Competitions organised by persons or bodies affiliated to EA, or otherwise under the jurisdiction of EA. By entering in a competition that is governed under EA rules, the participant is accepting to abide by these rules regardless of whether they are an EA member or not.

What is a Recorded Warning Card and how do I issue one?

Dressage, Eventing and Show Horse have a Recorded Warning Card template annexed in the corresponding Sport Rules which outlines the offences that a Recorded Warning Card can be issued for in each discipline and the process that an Official will need to follow when issuing one.

Who can eliminate a horse or issue a recorded warning?

Officials recognised by EA are responsible for the implementation of all GRs and Rules. Different disciplines have different Officials that hold this responsibility. Refer to the National Sport Rules for further information on which Officials are recognised by EA for the implementation of GRs and Rules which includes the elimination or issuing of a Recorded Warning Card to Athletes.

What can a Veterinary Exemption cover?

As per the EA GRs Article 141, individual sensory hairs may be removed by a veterinarian to prevent pain or discomfort for the Horse. Areas of hair that must be clipped, shaven or removed to allow veterinary treatment are exempt from this rule. Horses that have a veterinary exemption must provide proof in the form of a Veterinary Certificate to the Organising Committee and Event Officials on request.

Is there a certain length or number of Sensory Hairs that must remain on the horse?

No, there is no specified length or number of hairs that must remain on the horse. The spirit of the rule is that the Sensory Hairs of the horse are not purposely altered or modified in any way.

EA WARNING CARD

Event: _____
 Date: _____
 Person: _____
 Responsible: _____
 (Official: Please tick one)
☐ Making a horse with clipped or trimmed whiskers without providing a veterinary certificate (prior to January 2020)
☐ _____

Officials:
 Name: _____
 Jurisdiction: _____
 Signature of Official: _____
 Signature of Person Responsible: _____

RECORDED WARNING CARD
 Extract from the National Show Horse Rules

This card is for use at EA Official Show Horse events. National Show Horse Officials (Judges) which have received approved and appropriate EA training have the authority to issue a Recorded Warning Card at an Event. See Rule 5.8 and 5.9. Penalties, Reports, Appeals, Yellow and Recorded Warning Cards.

Recorded Warning Cards following a meeting with the party concerned at the event may be issued on the day and when being awarded by an EA Official, should ideally be delivered personally to the rider, together with an explanation as to why it is being issued and the possible consequences of any further offences being committed. In the case of a rider being under the age of 18 years, a Parent/Guardian must be present when personally delivering the Recorded Warning Card.

If after reasonable efforts the rider cannot be notified during the period of the event that they have received a Recorded Warning Card, the rider must be notified within 14 (fourteen) days of the event.

A Recorded Warning Card may be issued in addition to any other sanction(s) that may be issued in accordance with the EA General Regulations and/or the relevant Sport Rules. The Official who issues a Recorded Warning Card, will advise the Organising Committee who will advise the State Branch CEO and State Show Horse Authority (from the State where the event occurred) of the issue of Recorded Warning Card's and the reasons for its issue within 48 hours after the delivery of the warning to the Person Responsible. The State Branch CEO shall advise EA within 72 hours thereafter. EA will arrange for the Recorded Warning Card issued to be entered into the EA national database.

A Recorded Warning Card is a decision arising from the field of play and as such there is no Appeal against the issuing of such a warning.



Horse ear hairs are not sensory hairs and can be trimmed.

» Visit Website