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Incorporated Association No INC1301237

Uniting Modern Equestrians in Australia

General Safety Guidelines

Introduction

The *Bitless Inc General Safety Guidelines* have been compiled for the safe conduct of member activities as outlined in the Bitless Inc Constitution and amendments.

These General Safety Guidelines must be followed at any event or activity organised or undertaken by a Member or Guest, including whilst involved with a Member's group, club or other affiliate.

These Bitless Inc General Safety Guidelines cover every non commercial equestrian activity Bitless Inc Members undertake. Bitless Inc acknowledges that all equestrian activities vary in form and nature, and may include, but are not be limited to: informal gatherings of likeminded equestrians, organised competitive events, or individual training of horses at home. During any equestrian activity Members must adhere to the following principles in order to minimise any risk of injury during equestrian activities; to maximise safe conduct; maintain high standards of equine welfare; and to ensure continued public liability insurance coverage for our Members as a community.

Definitions

In these documents:

- The word **must** indicates a mandatory rule. Members must follow mandatory rules.
- The word **should** indicates an advisory rule. Members must follow an advisory rule OR have their own rule or risk management step in place to address the risk. Proof of this rule or risk management step will be provided to Bitless Inc upon request
- The word **may** indicates a recommended, optional guideline. Members may observe an optional guideline.
- The word **Member** means a person who has been accepted for Enthusiast, Fanatic or Guest membership of Bitless Inc and holds a current membership card
- The word **Equine** refers to horses, ponies and donkeys, and for the purposes of this document, any other animals that may be present during equestrian activities
- The word **Activity** refers to any action undertaken involving equines, whether ridden, driven, or groundwork, whether the setting is formal or informal (eg competitions, pleasure rides, or training at home)
- The words **Affiliate** means any formal or informal group, club or commercial entity that a Bitless Inc Member partakes in or shares Bitless Inc activities with. Any reference to such a group also includes a reference to Bitless Inc members that act independently in a formal or informal setting

Bitless Inc General Safety Guidelines

GENERAL SAFETY

1.1 Risk Analysis: Members must take a risk analysis for all events/activities to be undertaken. This is to highlight specific risk hazards such as traffic, dogs, general public, poor surfaces, float safety and other environments that are likely to be potentially stressful or harmful to horses.

Event organisers should prepare a formal, written Risk Analysis for the event

1.2 Safe Conduct: All Members and Guests must strive to prevent harm to others, by being aware of, and responsible for, their own actions and direction of travel, as well as alerting others of any safety issues they become aware of.

1.4 Emergencies: Members should be prepared for minor emergencies during all activities with equines, and have on hand appropriate First Aid supplies for both humans and equines, and a charged mobile phone, especially when alone. Event organisers should be prepared with a first aid kit for appropriate size of the event.

1.5 Insurance Claims: Must be made in writing directly to Bitless Inc. Forms are available to download on our website, or by contacting the Secretary.

HANDLERS, RIDERS & DRIVERS

2.1 Competency Members must be competent to undertake any approved activity. Sufficient practice or training in a safe area with or without a qualified instructor, prior to attending group events or public spaces is essential. Dismounting when in a difficult situation is to be commended, not criticised

2.2 Education Members should strive to continue to educate themselves in all aspects of equine behaviour, training, health and fitness. Understanding an equine's needs and motivations is critical to the safety of everyone, by preventing accidents

2.2 Minors Members under the age of 18 should be properly supervised by an appropriate adult or instructor.

2.3 Protective Clothing: All Members must/should wear a helmet (to Australian Standards or equivalent) when riding or driving. Minors must wear a helmet when riding or driving. Gloves and closed-toe shoes or boots should be worn. When riding on roads, in bush or remote areas, high visibility and reflective clothing should be worn, at least by the person riding, driving, or handling the horse. High Visibility horse clothing is also available, and should be used whenever horses are ridden, driven or lead on roads. Horses can blend into the background and all efforts should be made to ensure other road users can see the horse from a distance and prevent an accident.

EQUINES

3.1 Competency Equines must be trained to a sufficient standard prior to attending events or public spaces. Equines should be introduced to new environments with a sensitive handler on foot, prior to riding or driving.

3.2 Health & Fitness Equines must be healthy and fit in both body and mind prior to attending events. Members must put horse welfare above all other considerations, and will be commended, not criticised, by other Members or Guests when they do so.

3.3 Control Equines participate in activities that humans want them to, often regardless of the equine's opinion of the activity. Bitless Inc acknowledges that 100% control of horses is not possible, and is therefore not desirable. Proper training, good communication, gradual exposure to strange environments, and earning the trust of the equine is what keeps people safe, not metal and straps. Handlers, riders and drivers must ensure that they help their equines through difficult situations, without force or aggression. Dismounting in such a situation is to be commended and not criticised, and handlers in difficulty should be given appropriate space to work through the problem, and may be given assistance from another Member on foot. Members and Guests must accept that horses have their own thoughts and motivations, and support other Members to work through problems, and not pressure them to rush, or stress the equine.

3.3 Bridles & Halters Equines may wear any suitable headgear or none at all. Bridles and halters must be of the correct size, properly fitted and applied. Equines must be comfortable and any headgear must not prevent the horse from chewing or opening the mouth, and should not prevent the equine from yawning. Equines must be given sufficient training in any and all headgear used prior to riding or driving. Riders and drivers that are in the process of transitioning to bitless may only use mouthpieces included in the Bitless Inc Permitted Bit List. Bit Bypass Systems are permitted (see Permitted Bit List for details).

3.3 Saddles Riders may use saddles or bareback pads or nothing. Saddles and pads may be constructed of any appropriate materials, and be treed or treeless. Saddles must be of the correct size for both equine and rider, and fitted correctly on the equine. Equines must never carry more than 20% of their own bodyweight at any time, including rider and gear.

3.4 Harness and Vehicles Harness may be made of any suitable materials, and must be the correct size for the equine and properly fitted. Vehicles may be of traditional or modern construction and design, but must be the correct size and appropriate weight for the equine pulling it. Equines must never be asked to pull more than their own bodyweight in active competition, or on uneven terrain, and no more than double their own weight on level ground for inactive competitions (such as showing) or for demonstration purposes. Drivers must assess whether the environment and conditions are suitable for vehicles, with regards to surface, weather, and space available prior to every driven activity undertaken.

EVENTS, COMPETITIONS AND PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS

4.1 Events/Activities : All participants in any group event or activity (such as, but not restricted to, closed or open affiliate club events or public displays) shall hold all current relevant government permits, licenses or other forms of compliance necessary for the undertaking (in public or private) of such event or activity. The record or evidence of such compliance will be provided on request to Bitless Inc or relevant authorities.

4.2 Course and Display Boundaries: All arenas, competition courses or display areas of any type should have clearly defined public areas with appropriate boundaries. These boundaries should be regularly checked by event organisers and, where a potentially unsafe situation may occur, are to be rectified, or constantly monitored.

4.3 Event Rules: Rules for competitive events should be provided by the organisers. Horse welfare must always take precedence, and rules should favour good horsemanship and accuracy over speed and time, which encourages rough handling. Guidelines for some types of events are available from Bitless Inc, and can be modified to suit your needs. Dispute resolution procedures should be included in event rules, as well as how the event is scored.

4.4 Contingency: Medical and emergency contingency procedures are to be maintained and regularly reviewed, with evidence of such review available on request. A risk assessment is to be completed for each event or activity, clearly identifying contingency responses.

4.5 Events Notifications: Adequate and proper notification is to be made to any relevant Authority for any applicable event (including, but not limited to: local council for competitions that cross public land or roads, and local police for public parades or demonstrations)

4.6 Public Liability: The safety of spectators and the general public must be paramount. Efforts may be made to encourage spectators, by providing safe public access areas.

4.7 Additional Insurance: Affiliates must ensure that are sufficiently insured. Informal groups and most clubs will not need additional insurance, but it is the responsibility of the Affiliate to determine what the insurance needs of the members are, and act accordingly.