



PONY CLUB
AUSTRALIA

Feeding, Forage & Water at Pony Club Camps and Multi- Day Events

**A practical guide for
organisers, riders and
parents.**



About This Guide

Planning for a horse's needs across the full 24 hours

Pony Club camps, overnight events and multi-day competitions can mean a significant change to a horse's normal routine.

A horse that normally spends much of the day grazing or eating hay may instead spend several days stabled, yarded or tied to a float, with little or no access to pasture. Horses may also be travelling long distances, working more than usual and adapting to unfamiliar surroundings.

Horses are adapted to eat small amounts of forage across much of the day. When they cannot forage for themselves, we need to plan how their forage and water needs will be met across the **whole 24-hour period**, not just at breakfast and dinner.

This guide supports the requirements of the **Pony Club Australia Horse Welfare Policy**.

In this guide, "horse" refers to both horses and ponies.

Contents

Policy and Responsibilities | Page 4

The mandatory requirements of the [PCA Horse Welfare Policy](#), how breaches may be managed and the responsibilities of those caring for horses.

Forage Planning | Pages 5-7

How much forage to provide, why it matters, and how to plan for daytime, overnight and slow-feeding arrangements.

Water and Diet Management | Pages 8-9

Providing reliable access to clean water, monitoring intake and keeping each horse's normal diet as consistent as possible.

Practical Checklists and Appendices | Pages 10-16

Checklists for organisers, riders and parents, plus suggested entry conditions, declarations and event information wording.



Policy and Responsibilities

PCA Horse Welfare Policy: the non-negotiables

The mandatory requirements of the [PCA Horse Welfare Policy](#) apply to riders, coaches, officials and supporters assisting with the care of horses at Pony Club events and activities.

Under the policy, it is a breach to:

- fail to provide clean water to horses at a Pony Club event
- fail to provide water in containers that are clean, safe, secured and non-spillable
- fail to ensure horses are not deprived of access to food for more than six hours at a Pony Club event.

The policy gives the example of providing a hay net when a horse is tethered or yarded between activities.

The six-hour limit is a minimum welfare requirement. It should not be treated as a recommended feeding interval.

The practical aim should be to provide regular access to appropriate forage throughout the day and overnight, taking account of the individual horse's needs.

The [Horse Welfare Policy](#) also recognises that horses would normally spend more than 60% of their day grazing, that roughage should be a significant part of the diet and that denying horses sufficient opportunities to eat roughage can affect their welfare.

What can happen if the policy is breached?

Pony Club Australia seeks first to educate and help members understand good horse welfare and management.

However, the mandatory clauses of the [Horse Welfare Policy](#) are requirements, not recommendations.

Where an issue is identified, an official may speak with the rider, parent or person responsible for the horse and require the situation to be rectified.

In cases of extreme abuse or situations where a Pony Club official believes a horse's health and wellbeing are at risk, The [Horse Welfare Policy](#) also gives officials the authority to:

- immediately withdraw a horse and rider combination from Pony Club activities
- eliminate a combination from a competition
- refer an alleged breach for disciplinary action.

If either of the first two actions is taken, the Pony Club official must report the matter on the [Pony Club Report form](#) and should consider a report to the authority for cruelty to animals in your state.

Forage Planning

Plan forage over 24 hours

Being “fed” is not necessarily the same as having enough forage.

A horse might receive some hay in the morning and a hard feed in the evening but still spend long periods without anything to eat, particularly when there is no pasture available.

At home, the horse may normally graze or forage for many hours. At camp or competition, those opportunities need to be deliberately provided.

The [PCA Horse Welfare Policy](#) describes the horse’s need to eat, chew and search for high-fibre food such as hay for around **13–16 hours each day**.

How much forage should you plan for?

As a general planning guide, horses should receive approximately **1.5–2% of their bodyweight in forage each day**, unless an individual horse needs to be managed differently on veterinary or qualified nutritional advice.

Approximate Bodyweight	1.5%	2%
300kg pony	4.5kg	6kg
400kg pony/horse	6kg	8kg
500kg horse	7.5kg	10kg
600kg horse	9kg	12kg

These figures can help families plan how much forage to bring when a horse will have little or no access to pasture.

Where pasture is available and horses are able to graze, the amount of additional hay required will depend on how much pasture the horse is actually consuming.

Don’t rely on the number of “biscuits” of hay alone. Bale and biscuit weights vary considerably.

Weighing a few typical biscuits or filled hay nets at home is an easy way to get a much better idea of how much forage you are actually providing.

Forage Planning

Why does forage matter?

Horses are naturally adapted to spend many hours each day eating, chewing and foraging.

The horse's stomach produces acid continuously. Regular forage intake and the saliva produced through chewing help protect the stomach, while prolonged periods with an empty stomach can increase the risk of gastric irritation and squamous gastric ulceration.

Forage is also fundamental to normal digestive function and contributes significantly to the horse's nutritional needs.

The PCA Horse Welfare Policy recognises that eating itself contributes positively to wellbeing. It describes the pleasure of chewing, the interest provided by food and the comfort of having food in the gut. Long periods without access to forage are therefore not simply a feeding issue. They can affect both the horse's physical and mental welfare.

Providing hay is also not the end of the check. **Pay attention to whether the horse is actually eating normally while away from home.**

Daytime forage

At camp or a multi-day competition, think about what the horse will be doing between riding sessions as well as at scheduled feed times.

A horse may spend substantial periods:

- in a stable
- in a yard
- tied to a float
- waiting between classes or activities.

These periods need to be included in the feeding plan.

If a horse returns to a stable, yard or float area for a significant break, suitable forage should be available.

During shorter breaks, safe opportunities to hand-graze may be appropriate where suitable grass is available. Where it is not, riders should have appropriate forage available for their horse.

Hay nets or feeders can be useful, provided they are safely positioned and do not create an entanglement risk. Particular care should be taken with shod horses.

Forage Planning

Slow feeders

Slow-feeding hay nets or feeders may help extend eating time for horses that consume hay very quickly.

However, they should not be used as a way of providing an inadequate total quantity of forage.

Consider the individual horse:

- a rapid eater may benefit from an appropriately used slow feeder
- a naturally slow eater may have its intake restricted too much by one
- the horse should still be consuming an appropriate amount of forage across the day.

The aim is not simply to make a small amount of hay last longer. It is to provide **enough forage, with regular opportunities to eat it.**

Overnight forage

Overnight forage must be included in the feeding plan.

A horse stabled from late afternoon until the following morning may otherwise spend a substantial part of the night without anything to eat.

Before settling horses for the night:

- provide sufficient forage for the overnight period
- consider how quickly the individual horse normally eats
- make sure the horse is actually eating
- use an appropriate feeder or hay net where required and safe
- check rapid eaters later in the evening where practical and provide additional forage if needed
- check the water supply.

The Horse Welfare Policy requirement that horses must not go more than six hours without access to food continues to apply overnight.

Where riders are required to provide their own overnight hay, this must be made clear **before the camp or event**, so families can bring sufficient forage for the duration of the stay.



Water and Diet Management

Water

The PCA Horse Welfare Policy requires horses at Pony Club events to be provided with clean water in containers that are clean, safe, secured and non-spillable.

In practice, the aim is to ensure the horse has a reliable supply of clean drinking water and cannot readily leave itself without water by knocking or tipping its container over.

A sturdy water tub or bucket may be suitable in a stable or yard where it is stable, safe and appropriate for that horse.

Water containers should:

- be clean and free from contamination
- be suitable for the horse and the area in which they are being used
- be sufficiently stable or secured so they cannot readily be overturned
- not create an entanglement or injury risk
- be checked regularly
- be refilled before the horse runs short of water.

Some horses habitually tip, paw at or play with water containers. Those horses may require a more stable container or additional measures to secure it.

Providing water once is not enough. The water needs to remain available to the horse.

Water and Diet Management

Monitor drinking while away

Don't assume that because water is available, the horse is drinking normally.

Travel, workload, unfamiliar surroundings and changes in routine may affect how much an individual horse eats and drinks.

Check water regularly and pay attention to:

- whether the horse is drinking
- whether water consumption appears noticeably different from normal
- appetite
- manure output and consistency
- general demeanour
- recovery after exercise.

The Horse Welfare Policy specifically asks coaches and officials to monitor for dehydration, particularly on hot days and at competitive events.

If a horse is not eating or drinking normally, investigate promptly and seek veterinary advice where appropriate.

Keep the horse's normal diet as consistent as possible

Riders and owners are responsible for bringing the hard feed, supplements and other dietary products their individual horse normally receives for the duration of the camp or event.

Where possible:

- maintain the horse's usual diet and feeding routine
- bring forage the horse is accustomed to eating
- avoid unnecessary sudden feed changes
- bring sufficient hard feed and forage for the full stay, with some extra in case plans change.

Camp and event organisers should **not be expected to provide individual hard feeds.**

A generic hard feed should also not be relied upon as part of the standard camp feeding arrangements. Horses have different diets and nutritional needs, and sudden changes in feed are best avoided.

The organiser's role is to make it clear what **forage, if any, will be supplied**, so riders know what they need to bring.



Practical Checklists

Camp and Event Organiser Checklist

Before the event

- Ensure entry conditions require entrants to comply with the [Pony Club Australia Horse Welfare Policy](#).
- Make participants aware that breaches of mandatory welfare requirements may result in withdrawal or elimination from the event and may be referred for further action.
- Decide whether forage will be supplied by the organiser, brought by riders, or a combination of both.
- Make sure arrangements allow horses to receive adequate forage across the whole 24-hour period.
- Make sure planned arrangements do not result in horses going more than six hours without access to food.
- Consider daytime and overnight forage requirements.
- Confirm how horses without access to pasture will receive forage while stabled, yarded or tethered.
- Confirm that clean drinking water will be readily available.
- Make suitable arrangements for safe hay and feed storage.
- Allow riders to manage their horses' individual dietary requirements.
- Nominate an appropriate event official or Horse Welfare Officer to be the point of contact for horse welfare matters.

During the event

- Check that horses have access to clean drinking water.
- Check that water containers are suitable, safe and sufficiently stable or secured.
- Check water supplies regularly and refill as required.
- Watch for horses going prolonged periods without access to food.
- Check that horses stabled, yarded or tethered for extended periods have suitable forage available.
- Ensure planned overnight forage arrangements are being followed.
- Pay attention to horses that are not eating or drinking normally.
- Raise welfare concerns promptly with the rider, parent or person responsible for the horse and require the issue to be addressed.
- Ensure the appropriate event official or Horse Welfare Officer is aware of significant welfare concerns.
- Where an issue is not rectified, or the horse's welfare may be compromised, refer the matter to the authorised event official for action under the [PCA Horse Welfare Policy](#).
- Record and report suspected breaches through the appropriate PCA [reporting process](#) where required.

Pony Club Australia seeks to educate first wherever appropriate. The aim is to build a culture in which good horse welfare is understood and expected.

Where a welfare issue cannot be resolved through immediate education and corrective action, the [Horse Welfare Policy](#) provides for withdrawal, elimination, investigation and disciplinary processes.

Practical Checklists

Rider and Parent Checklist

Before leaving for camp or an overnight or multi-day event:

- I know my horse's approximate bodyweight.
- I know approximately how much forage my horse normally eats over 24 hours.
- I have used the 1.5–2% guide above when planning how much forage my horse may need, unless my horse is managed differently on professional advice.
- I know exactly what forage, if any, the organiser will provide.
- I have packed enough additional forage for the entire stay.
- I have planned for forage during the day and overnight.
- I have considered what my horse will eat while stabled, yarded or tied up between activities.
- I have packed my horse's usual hard feed and supplements.
- I have avoided unnecessary sudden changes to my horse's diet.
- I have safe and suitable hay nets or feeders if required.
- I have a suitable water container if riders are required to provide one.
- I know where clean drinking water will be available.
- I will check my horse's water regularly rather than assuming that because the container was filled, water is still available.
- I will monitor whether my horse is actually eating and drinking normally.
- I know who to speak to if I have a concern about my horse while at the event.

One question to keep asking

Over the last 24 hours, has this horse had enough opportunity to eat, forage and drink?

Breakfast and dinner alone do not tell us whether a horse's needs have been met across the rest of the day and night.

Camps and multi-day events are also valuable opportunities to teach young riders why good feeding, forage and water management are fundamental parts of good horsemanship.

Appendix A

Suggested Event Entry Condition

Horse Welfare

By entering this event, I acknowledge that the welfare of my horse is my responsibility and must take priority over participation and competition.

I confirm that my horse is fit, healthy, appropriately conditioned and suitable for the activities entered, and that I will provide appropriate nutrition, hydration, care, equipment and rest throughout the event.

I will not knowingly participate with, or subject my horse to, any activity, workload, equipment or treatment that may compromise its welfare.

I understand that an authorised event official or veterinarian may inspect or assess my horse where there is a welfare or fitness concern and may require the horse to be rested, withdrawn or removed from an activity or event.

I understand and agree that I must not punish my horse or use any action intended to inflict pain, fear or distress in response to non-performance, refusal or unwanted behaviour. This includes inappropriate use of a whip, spurs, reins or other equipment, hitting, kicking or any other physical action intended as punishment.

Where my horse is unwilling, distressed or unable to perform, I will cease or modify the activity and address the underlying cause in a manner consistent with the [Pony Club Australia Horse Welfare Policy](#).

I agree to comply with the:

- [Pony Club Australia Horse Welfare Policy](#)
- [Pony Club Australia Horse Medication Policy](#)
- [PCA National Gear Rules](#)
- reasonable directions of authorised event officials relating to the welfare of my horse.

I understand that if an authorised event official reasonably believes that I have breached the [Pony Club Australia Horse Welfare Policy](#), or that continuing participation may compromise my horse's welfare, the horse and rider combination may be withdrawn from an activity or eliminated from the event and the matter may be referred for further action.

I understand that the [PCA Horse Welfare Policy](#) states that the combined weight of rider and saddlery should not be more than 20% of the horse's weight. I may be asked to provide information about my horse's weight or the combined rider and equipment weight if an event official has concerns about the suitability of the combination.

I understand that I may be required to complete the Horse Welfare Commitment and Fitness Declaration as part of my entry.

Appendix B

Horse Welfare Commitment and Fitness Declaration

Horse welfare comes before participation, competition and results

By entering this event, I confirm that I have considered the welfare and fitness of my horse and will comply with the [Pony Club Australia Horse Welfare Policy](#), [Horse Medication Policy](#), applicable competition rules and reasonable directions of authorised event officials.

I declare that:

- My horse is fit, healthy and appropriately conditioned for the activities and workload for which it is entered.
- My horse is free from any known illness, injury, lameness or condition that would make participation inappropriate.
- I have considered my horse's age, fitness, condition, experience, workload and recovery needs.
- I have considered whether my horse is an appropriate size and type for me to ride.
- I understand that the [PCA Horse Welfare Policy](#) states that the combined weight of rider and saddlery should not be more than 20% of the horse's weight.
- My horse will have access to sufficient appropriate forage, feed and clean drinking water throughout the event, including overnight.
- I have used the 1.5–2% bodyweight forage planning guide in this document unless my horse is being managed differently on veterinary or qualified nutritional advice.
- I understand that under the [PCA Horse Welfare Policy](#) my horse must not go for more than six hours without access to food at a Pony Club event.
- I will make appropriate arrangements for my horse's stable, yard, shelter, shade, footing, ventilation and rest during the event.
- I will monitor my horse regularly for injury, illness, dehydration, fatigue, heat stress, lameness, distress and changes in eating or drinking.
- I will use appropriate, correctly fitted tack and equipment that complies with the [PCA National Gear Rules](#).
- I will not use equipment or training methods that cause pain, injury, fear or unnecessary discomfort.
- I will not knowingly overwork, exhaust, punish or otherwise compromise the welfare of my horse.
- I will allow my horse appropriate rest and recovery and will cease participation where continuing may compromise its welfare.
- I will seek appropriate veterinary attention where my horse is injured, unwell or requires veterinary assessment.
- I understand that medication and prohibited substances must be managed in accordance with the [Pony Club Australia Horse Medication Policy](#).
- I understand that an authorised event official or veterinarian may intervene where there is a concern about my horse's welfare and may require my horse to be assessed, rested, withdrawn or retired from competition.
- I will comply promptly with any reasonable direction given by an authorised event official concerning the welfare of my horse.

Appendix B

Declaration

I understand and agree that the welfare of my horse takes priority over participation and competition outcomes.

By submitting my entry, I confirm that the information above is accurate and that I accept responsibility for the welfare, fitness, nutrition, hydration, health, environment and appropriate care of my horse for the duration of the event.

I understand that failure to comply with this commitment or with the [Pony Club Australia Horse Welfare Policy](#) may result in my horse being withdrawn from an activity or event and may result in further action under applicable Pony Club rules and policies.

Appendix C

Suggested Feeding, Forage and Water Wording for Camp and Event Information

Horse feeding and water arrangements

All horses attending this event must be managed in accordance with the [Pony Club Australia Horse Welfare Policy](#).

Under the policy, horses must not go for more than six hours without access to food, and clean drinking water must be available.

Forage

[Choose/adapt as appropriate]

Option A: Forage supplied by the organiser

The event will provide:

- [type of hay/forage]
- approximately [quantity] per horse per day
- provided at approximately [times]
- overnight forage: [included/not included].

Riders are responsible for bringing any additional forage required to meet their horse's individual needs.

Option B: Riders supply forage

Riders are required to bring sufficient suitable forage for their horse for the full duration of the event, including daytime and overnight requirements.

As a general planning guide, allow approximately 1.5–2% of the horse's bodyweight in forage per day, unless the horse is being managed differently on veterinary or qualified nutritional advice.

For example, a 500 kg horse would require approximately 7.5–10 kg of forage per day under this general guide.

Riders should bring some additional forage in case their stay is extended or their horse consumes more than expected.

Hard feed

Riders are responsible for bringing their horse's usual hard feed, supplements and other individual dietary products.

Where possible, horses should remain on their normal diet while away from home and unnecessary sudden feed changes should be avoided.

Appendix C

Water

Clean drinking water will be available at:

[location/s]

Riders are required to:

[provide their own suitable water container / use containers supplied by the organiser]

Water containers must be clean, safe and sufficiently stable or secured so that the horse cannot readily overturn them and leave itself without water.

Riders remain responsible for regularly checking their horse's water supply and ensuring the horse is drinking normally.

Questions or individual requirements

If you have questions about the feeding or water arrangements, or your horse has individual management requirements that may affect their stay, please contact:

[name/role/contact details]

before the event.