

STANDARDS OF OPERATIONS

The Standards of Operations manual is designed to help guide all facilities which engage in equine related care and/or activities.

For Alberta stables

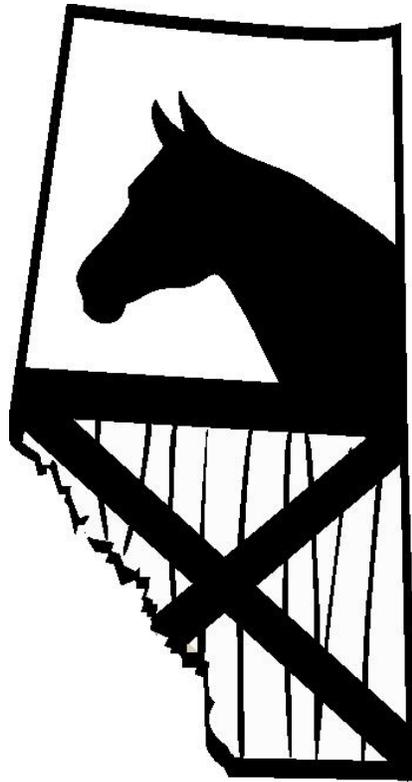


Table of Contents

Introduction	1
SECTION A: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT	1
SECTION B: SITE	4
SECTION C: EQUINE MANAGEMENT.....	7
SECTION D: PROGRAMS	8
Glossary of terms.....	8
Resources	9

Alberta Stables Association Mission

To strengthen Alberta’s stables by promoting safety, animal welfare and sound business practices as well as providing support, education and marketing opportunities for the stable industry.

Standards of operations for Alberta stables

The Standards of Operations manual was created to help guide all facilities which engage in equine related care and/or activities. This manual should serve as a reference for best practices within the Alberta stable industry. There are thousands of people participating in the horse industry each year; the stables that serve these people have a responsibility to provide safe, high quality service. This manual has kept safety, practicality, current legislation and customer service at the forefront. Please note that some previously existing equine facilities/stables may have been developed with previous standards. It is not the intention of this manual to devalue them in any way. This manual will be most helpful for those building new facilities, remodeling older facilities, beginning a stable business, and for potential customers to understand what they should be looking for in an equine facility.

SECTION A: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Any horse boarding facility is a livestock service and business which should operate as such. Common business practices and ethics should apply to all aspects of the facility's operations and are relevant to the conduct of individuals and entire equine establishments.

As a business, some or all of the following ancillary services may be helpful and utilized by stables:

- Regular Bookkeeping
- A chartered accountant (With agricultural business experience)
- Legal Services
- An insurance broker
- Advertising, marketing, networking
- A website, blog, social media, e-newsletter
- Continuing education courses

As with many business arrangements, the one of horse caregiver and horse owner might resemble an agreement between a landlord and tenant.

1. Stables should have board agreements and/or contracts in place for boarding, training, leases and services provided. *(All parties should receive a signed copy of the contract)*
2. A certain amount of notice might be required from clients and/or stables who wish to terminate a boarding contract. *All contracts should have a termination clause for both stable owner and for the boarding client.*
3. Stable owners/managers might find it useful to request references from potential clients.

Conflict has the potential to arise in any business arrangement. In order to avoid disputes, some of the following strategies are recommended to manage expectations:

- Communicate clearly between clients, staff and owners/operators
- Document client, staff and facility expectations
- Listen actively when concerns arise
- Provide feedback where appropriate
- Evaluate and follow up as required
- Modify where necessary, change can be good

SECTION B: SITE

The physical property or facility at which a horse related activity is conducted affects the ability of the staff and management to operate. A safe and organized facility coupled with a positive atmosphere may encourage clients to return. These recommendations are intended to compliment the standards generally accepted in the horse industry as outlined in the Equine Code of Practice. For further information about the code visit http://www.nfacc.ca/pdfs/codes/equine_code_of_practice.pdf

Ask the following questions:

1. Are the facilities for horses "safe and appropriate"? "Safe and appropriate" includes:

a) Any structure on the facility property should be safely designed and well maintained. This includes all stalls, barns, sheds and shelters. Poorly designed or inadequately managed stabling can contribute to the spread of disease and risk of injury. Site considerations should include safety and comfort of horses, ease of access, adequate drainage and proper ventilation.

For further information about indoor housing requirements, refer to the Equine Code of Practice, Section 2.3.

b) Feed should be securely and suitably stored so no horse can access it. Proper storing of hay and concentrates will help prevent contamination of feed as well as potential unobstructed access to it by horses which can cause serious health complications.

For further information about the safety of feedstuffs, refer to the Equine Code of Practice, Section 3.2.

c) There is consistent and suitable manure management of stalls, paddocks and corrals. Proper storage of manure is an important aspect of any horse operation. Manure is disposed of properly or stored according to the Agricultural Operation Practices Act (AOPA).

Detailed information is available by calling 1-800-292-5697 or at [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex14194#storage](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex14194#storage).

e) All horses have access to appropriate shelter (natural or constructed) which protects from extreme weather conditions. Natural shelter includes trees or hedges. Constructed shelter includes wind fences, barns, shade cloths or open front shelters.

For further information about shelter requirements, refer to the Equine Code of Practice, Section 2.1.2.

f) Pastures, paddocks and corrals have safe and secure fencing with no protruding objects, nails or screws. The size of the enclosed area, and number of horses housed within that area, dictates the type of fencing materials used. Perimeter fence is designed to keep the livestock of an owner or occupier out of the adjoining land of another owner or occupier according to the Alberta Line Fence Act (May 2003), Section 1.1(2)(3).

For further information about fencing requirements, refer to the Equine Code of Practice, Section 2.1.4.

g) All horses have access to safe, palatable and clean water. Under most circumstances, snow will not adequately meet a horse's water requirements. Water troughs/watering devices should be cleaned regularly and maintained to ensure there are no sharp or protruding edges.

For further information about water necessities, refer to the Equine Code of Practice, Section 3.1.

h) All materials considered hazardous by WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System) are handled and stored according to WHMIS (Propane, Paint, Biohazards etc.). WHMIS requirements place an onus on stable owners to ensure that controlled products used, stored, handled or disposed of in the workplace are properly labelled and MSDSs are made available to employees. Staff may also receive education and training to ensure the safe storage, handling and use of controlled products in the workplace. For further detailed information please refer to <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/occup-travail/whmis-simdut/index-eng.php>



Image courtesy of <http://www.itscorp.ca/training-whmis.html>

i) Indoor facilities provide adequate ventilation. Sufficient ventilation will address the following factors:

- Maintain ideal ambient temperature
- Prevent buildup of noxious gases (ammonia) and dust
- Remove excess moisture (a factor in mould growth and respiratory issues)
- Remove excess heat
- Remove stale air
- Bring in fresh air without causing drafts

For further information about indoor air quality requirements, refer to the Equine Code of Practice, Section 2.3.5.

j) Suitable facilities to appropriately segregate compatible groups of horses. These groups could include:

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| - Stallions | - Mares and foals | - Temperament |
| - Sick or injured | - Dietary requirements | - Quarantine |
| - Yearlings | - Size or age of horses | - Owned or boarded |

2. All buildings, barns, arenas, parking lots, etc., are safe for the customers/clients, visitors and staff that will use them.

Safety concerns include:

a) Adequate lighting for people and for horses. Lights should function safely and not be within reach of horses. Considerations could also be made for emergency lighting during power outages.

For further information about lighting, refer to the Equine Code of Practice, Section 2.3.2.

b) Aisles, paths and walkways are non-slip and free of hazards. This should include safe passage through snow and ice, repairs to cracks and holes to prevent slipping, tripping or falling by humans and/or horses.

For further information about applicable walkway surfaces, refer to the Equine Code of Practice, Section 2.3.3.

c) Tools and equipment should be stored safely. No tools or equipment should be left in a manner where they could injure a person or horse.

d) There is clearly visible and unobstructed access to functioning fire extinguishers. The class of fire extinguisher suitable for stables is ABC and a fire extinguisher should be readily available at each entry point to facility buildings. *It is important to know how to properly use a fire extinguisher and to check them monthly. In Alberta, portable fire extinguishers must be inspected and certified annually by a trained and certified technician.*

3. Do areas (indoor & outdoor) used for riding/driving meet the following minimum safety standards?

Minimum safety standards questions should include:

a) Fenced material for outdoor riding arena/area is safe and is attached to the inside of the posts.

Yes No N/A

b) The arena/track provides safe, well maintained footing.

Yes No N/A

c) Riding areas are free of any hazardous material, equipment or obstructions that can lead to injury of horse or human.

Yes No N/A

d) The riding area is large enough for the number of users.

Yes No N/A

e) The riding area is inspected regularly by staff/management.

Yes No N/A

4. An equine facility should provide sufficient space where a person can handle their horse safely.

A horse handler should be able to turn a horse 180° without contacting another horse or hazards. Spaces include barn aisles, alley ways, tracks and lanes.

5. Safety guidelines should be developed for the facility and posted somewhere visible.

Safety guidelines might consider addressing the following categories:

- People
- Horses
- Facility

Some examples of safety guidelines might include:

- *All staff are required to wear closed toed shoes while at work on the property.*
- *Horses may not enter through the small door designed for humans, please use the big door.*
- *Lunging of horses is only permitted in the designated outdoor arena and never during lessons.*
- *This is a non-smoking property, no pets are allowed and for your safety, the barn closes at 9 p.m. no exceptions.*

6. It is suggested that equine facilities have applicable signage posted to let people know of the risk associated with horses and their related activities. Caution be advised that equine activities take place on these premises and that all equine activities involve inherent risk. Proceed at your own risk.

Risk related signage should be checked annually with the facility's insurance company to ensure it is still valid.

7. In case of fire, flood or other natural disasters' an evacuation plan should be in place. Stables should request an inspection of their facility by local fire officials to ensure fire prevention measures are appropriate.

Detailed information is available at [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/All/com14476](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/All/com14476)

8. All premises that have livestock, including horses, are required to acquire a Premises Identification number (PID). As commingling sites, stables are required, under Alberta's Animal Health Act, to obtain a PID Account, register all their sites and provide the PID Number(s) to the users of their site(s). PID numbers are important for tracking the location of animals in case of disease outbreak and are required on various transportation documents. Detailed information at [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/trace14212](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/trace14212).

9. Equine facilities should have a standard practice in place to check, repair and maintain equipment.

This could include: tractors, ATVs, hoses, pumps, smoke detectors, power tools, landscaping machinery etc.

10. All equine related facilities should have an area large enough for large trucks and/or trailers to safely maneuver. In the event of a large delivery or an emergency, entry to the property could be compromised if the facility is not accessible. A standard fire engine in Alberta requires an overhead clearance not less than 5 metres, a minimum width of 6 metres is required for entry and set up and have a centreline radius not less than 12 metres. Alberta Building Code (2006), ABC – 3.2.5.6. (1), Access Route Design.

11. If an equine facility provides access to riding trails on their property, it is their responsibility to ensure, with reasonable practicability, that these trails are safe. This should include that trail heads are clearly marked. Trails on the property should be routinely checked and timely information is available about their conditions and potential hazards. *Hazards might include potentially dangerous wild life spotted in the area, higher than usual water crossings, extremely unstable footing, impassable terrain or potential for natural disasters.*

12. It is encouraged that equine facilities have a first aid/injury protocol in place.

First aid injury protocols should include:

- a) At least one staff/trail guide/instructor/manager on the premises is certified in Basic Human First Aid. *It is recommended that all staff are certified in current first aid and CPR.*
- b) A fully stocked first aid kit for humans is accessible.
- c) Documentation of major first aid incidents and near misses.
- d) Proper directions to facility outlined and posted near a client accessible phone line for emergency response.
- e) Facility staff should have the ability to foresee risks before they occur.

13. Every equine facility should have “Acknowledgement of Risk and Release of Liability” waivers signed by all participants. Participants under the age of 18 must have ‘Acknowledgement of Risk and Release of Liability’ forms signed by their parent or legal guardian. The following wording has been regarded as essential by all providers of recreational activities, including equine, by the Alberta Court of Appeal in Murray v. Bitango: *to save harmless and keep indemnified the [defendants] from and against all claims, actions, costs and expenses and demands in respect to death, injury, loss or damage to my person or property, howsoever caused, arising out of or in connection with my taking part in this event not withstanding that the same may have been contributed to or occasioned by the negligence of the [defendants].*

SECTION C: EQUINE MANAGEMENT

The focus of this section is the ethical and acceptable care of horses. The management practices should reflect the quality of a facility, staff and program. Clients should also be taught respect for the horses and the importance of their health and safety. Proper equine management requires knowledge of their needs, behavior and an understanding of acceptable methods of care.

1. All head riding instructors/trainers and head trail guides should meet minimum requirements.

Head Instructors should be:

Minimum 18 years of age

Equestrian coach certification or equivalent experience

Current First Aid Certificate (CPR is recommended)

Head Trail Guides

Minimum 18 years of age

Current First Aid Certificate (CPR is recommended)

Minimum three years guiding experience

2. The facility's horse management program should meet standards generally accepted in the horse industry, as outlined in the Equine Code of Practice, Section 4 and Section 6.

Including:

- a) Regular hoof care, parasite management, inoculations and basic veterinary care.
- b) Regular feeding of a proper daily ration to sustain health and vitality, including salt.
- c) Knowledge of basic horse first aid.
- d) A standard practice to check the physical well-being of each horse.
- e) Acceptable husbandry practices including regular turnout, exercise and social interaction with other equines.

3. The stable should have biosecurity procedures/requirements for horses entering and exiting the property.

For further information about proper biosecurity protocols visit

http://www.albertaequestrian.com/Download/Industry/Equine_biosecurity_principles_and_best_practices_guide.pdf

4. Every equine facility should have suitable quarantine area(s) for potentially infectious animals to be well cared for until they are cleared to join the general population. For further information about quarantine

procedures visit <http://www.albertaequestrian.com/Download/Industry/New-Horse-SOP-sample-FINAL.pdf>

SECTION D: PROGRAMS

The facility director/owner/manager and staff have an obligation to ensure the well-being of their clients and their horses. Keep in mind, guidelines and policies will vary depending on the type of facility and services provided. If the stable provides programs, they should meet discipline specific criteria e.g. safe jumps for jumping, proper footing for reining manoeuvres, adequate room for buggies or carts to safely turn, etc.

1. The facility/program should have a procedure for selecting appropriate lesson, sale, lease or trail horses for the criteria of the job it is required to do and the capabilities of the client. For example: Matching an untrained horse with a novice rider/driver/handler would be inappropriate and potentially dangerous.

2. The facility/program should have a policy in place to limit the maximum workload for each lesson/trail horse depending on the following factors: season, age of the horse, workload, physical condition of the horse and fitness for the job required.

3. If lessons, coaching or clinics are available to clients, the facility/program should have instruction designed to provide safe, progressive education. Programs should also be made fun to participate in where possible.

If the facility offers programs, the following questions should be addressed:

1. Does the facility have guidelines regarding a safe ratio of staff to riders? Yes No N/A

For suggested ratios, visit the Certified Horsemanship Association at <http://cha-ahse.org>. Facilities may wish to consult their insurance broker as to what the facility's insurance coverage may dictate.

2. Does the facility have a policy regarding attire for chosen disciplines? Yes No N/A

a) Does it specify the use of approved equestrian helmets? Yes No N/A

b) Does it specify riding boots or hard shoes with a minimum ½ inch heel? Yes No N/A

c) Does it specify long pants? Yes No N/A

3. Does the facility have a policy to ensure tack and equipment are properly fitted and in good repair? Yes No N/A

a) Are there guidelines for what clients do with their own their tack and equipment? Yes No N/A

This could include all tack is checked by the instructor/trail guide prior to mounting for lessons/trail rides.

4. Does the facility have appropriate supervision guidelines to manage client's safety? Yes No N/A

This could include requirements for parental supervision of youth under 18 at all times throughout lessons.

5. Does the facility have expectations for recreational or unstructured activities? Yes No N/A

This could include unsupervised time after lessons for cooling out horses, unguided trail rides etc.

Glossary of Terms

Inherent risks of equine activities: Shall mean those dangers or conditions which are an integral part of equine activities, including, but not limited to: i. the propensity of an equine to behave in ways that may result in injury, harm or death to persons on or around them and/or damage to property in their vicinity. ii. the unpredictability of an equine's reaction to such things as sounds, sudden movement and unfamiliar objects, persons or other animals; iii. the equine's response to certain hazards such as surface and subsurface objects; iv. collisions with other equines, animals, people and objects; v. the potential of a participant to act in a negligent manner that may contribute to injury to the participant or others, such as failing to maintain control over the equine or to act within his or her ability.

Stable: Also known as a livery stable; an establishment where privately owned equines, belonging to one or more owner(s) are kept, boarded and sometimes trained for a set fee.

Resources

Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development	310-FARM (3276)	www.agric.gov.ab.ca
Alberta Arbitration & Mediation Association	Toll Free: 1-800-232-7214	www.aams.ab.ca
Alberta Equestrian Federation	Toll Free: 1-877-463-6233	www.albertaequestrian.com
Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC)	1-403-662-8050	www.afac.ab.ca
Alberta SPCA	1-780-447-3600	www.albertaspca.org
Alberta Stables Association		www.findalbertastables.ca
Alberta Veterinary Medical Association	Toll-Free: 1-800-404-2862	www.abvma.ca
Certified Horsemanship Association		www.cha-ahse.org
Horse Industry Association of Alberta	1-403-420-5949	www.albertahorseindustry.ca
Livestock Identification Services	Toll Free: 1-866-509-2088	www.lis-alberta.com
National Farm Animal Care Council		www.nfacc.ca
National Fire Protection Association		www.nfpa.org
Regulatory Assurance Division Hotline	1-403-755-1471, After Hours: 1-866-252-6403	