

Guidelines for the Keeping of Horses at Events and Shows

There has been a lot of discussion already about the use of electric-tape yards at events.

Equestrian Australia *General Regulation*, published in 2007 for 2008, state in Article 109.3

"Stabling and yards should be of solid construction. From 01 January 2010, the use of electrified tape, strings, ropes or chains, will not be permitted at EA Events."

A yard will be considered as a rigid enclosed area in which a horse is confined but in which it may be loose to freely move around.

The rule will not apply to a situation where a horse remains tied to a float or truck on a short tether and is not free to move around.

For 2010 this 'yard' rule will not be enforced at events where the event organisers have published in the event rules or conditions that the rule will not apply. Responsibility for non-compliance with the yard rule will rest with the event organising committees. All other EA rules must be met.

Event organisers are reminded that applying this exception to the yard rule will not relieve them from responsibility for complying with any National Sport Rule, Branch Rule or venue rule or condition relating to stabling and yards, and it remains the responsibility of the event organisers to ensure that they comply with all applicable occupational health and safety laws.

Over the course of 2010, standards will be devised for yards in consultation with the National Sport Committees and the Branches and affiliated bodies and these will be published in the 3rd quarter of 2010 to be effective on 01 January 2011.

Our friends across the Tasman have had a rule for a number of years prohibiting the use of electric tape for yards (in fact, we have 'borrowed' extensively from their rules) and everyone has learnt how to live with it. Clubs and associations that allow the use of yards made with electric tape are risking breakouts of horses and the possibility of injury and damage (or worse).

How appropriate is electric fencing in a show ground?

There has been a debate about the use of high-voltage electrified tape at show grounds and other event venues. While horses may learn to 'respect' this tape, many will not take it too seriously, especially when prevailing conditions or poor construction lower the intended effect of the tape.

Electricity needs a conductor to flow. When there is little or no connection for a charge to pass, the effect is drastically reduced. Factors contributing to such reduction are

- dry weather and ground conditions
- horse rugs on horses, especially in winter
- malfunctioning charge devices
- 'shorts' in the line deflecting the main charge before it can do its job
- the charge unit is not switched on; etc. etc.

Other factors reducing the 'safety' of electric tape fences are

- poor construction of the yard
- horse-unfriendly stakes
- stakes not securely rammed into the ground
- loose, sagging tape, etc.

Conversely, a horse, which accidentally receives a jolt, may in reaction break through the fence, ignoring whatever charge is left in the fence. This may stir up other horses to do the same. There have been several breakouts of horses from facilities, where electric tape fences were used, the last at an Endurance event in New Zealand in 2009.

In other words, the use of electric-tape fences for yards, especially when not properly constructed, is not a reliable and safe method to keep horses at an event. The worst examples of electric-tape yards are those that are interconnected to make up a row, so when one horse breaks out, it can take the rest of the yards – and horses - with it.

Guidelines (for discussion)

As per EA General Regulations, electric-tape yards will not be permitted at all from 2010 at EA events and events held by EA-affiliated organisations in Australia, except where organisers allow them.

OCs should make the inspection of the grounds and the way participants keep their horses, part of their risk management. After all, it is the organizers and their insurers who will be made respondents to any claims resulting from damage or injury.

Principles for keeping horses at events

1. The OC determines whether it will allow portable yards to be used. Venue owners may have their own regulations that OCs must follow. What is and is not allowed must be published in the event's Conditions of Entry.
2. Horses should not be left unattended for long periods. Regular inspection is recommended.
3. When not being ridden or led, horses should be tied to a building, properly installed hitching rails or similar structures, a float, a horse truck or similar.
4. If a horse is kept in an approved yard, it may be loose.
5. Electric tape should not be used at events at all. An exception is when it is used around the top of rigid yards or stables to stop horses from reaching across the yard fence.
6. Where day stalls, yards or stables at a venue (not portable yards) have an open side, this may be secured with a chain or rope of suitable strength. Electric tape must not be used for this purpose.

Guidelines for Portable Yards

When yards are used, they should comply with the following minimum requirements:

1. Yards intended for 'loose' horses should have a minimum area of 3m x 3m.
2. Yards should not extend for more than 5m from a truck or float.
3. The minimum height should be 1.2m.
4. Minimum number of rails: 2 with a maximum distance of 600mm between rails.
5. Yards should be made of alloy, steel or galvanised pipe. (Note: New technologies with different properties may become available and may be allowed if safe.) Galvanised pipe or steel uprights should have a minimum wall thickness of 2mm and be at least 25mm in diameter. Alloy uprights and rails should have a minimum wall thickness of 3mm and be at least 32mm in diameter,
6. Uprights should be anchored to the ground at least in the free-standing corners away from the truck/float, to prevent movement. Preferable, all uprights should be anchored to the ground. (Note: If the design of the yard does not make a provision for anchoring, this can be done by sliding uprights over posts rammed into the ground or by attaching uprights to posts with strong electrical ties or similar methods.)
7. Single yards may be attached to a truck or a float.
8. Portable yards may be constructed in a row or other joint assembly (square, rectangle). This assembly may be free-standing

Guideline for Electric Tape Yards (for discussion)

1. The use of electric-tape yards should be avoided wherever possible. Many Organising Committees, venue owners and some sport rules already prohibit the use of electric-tape yards.
2. There may, however, be a need for these in **remote locations** where there is no established horse event venue and during 2010 in the **transition period** to the implementation of the new rule at other events.
3. Two strands of electric tape (not string/wire) should be used. The use of wide tape (usually white in colour) is recommended.
4. The minimum height of the top tape or rail is 1m and the approximate distance to the next tape 400mm.
5. The tape should be taught at all times regardless of whether the horse is in the yard or not.
6. The tape should be electrified when the horse in the yard, with a minimum voltage of 2000V.
7. Yards should have four rigid corners (examples are star pickets, which MUST have safety caps, the side of a truck, a permanent fence already standing). Rigid corners must be firmly in the ground. Safety caps on star posts must be firmly attached.
8. No side of an electric-tape yard may be shared with another yard. In other words, yards must be freestanding and not be part of a row of yards.