



**NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service**

# **Domestication (rehomeing) guidelines**

**For feral horses removed from NSW National  
Parks and Wildlife Service managed estate**



## Acknowledgement of Country

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

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# **Domestication (rehoming) guidelines**

These guidelines provide information for anyone interested in becoming a rehomer of feral horses from NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) managed estate under the Feral Horse Domestication (rehoming) program. The guidelines include an overview of the processes involved and information that can help you become a rehomer.

The guidelines set out:

- the eligibility criteria that must be satisfied to apply for the program to become a rehomer
- when the rehomer becomes responsible for the horses
- the requirement for a rehomer to declare they will comply with specified requirements, including relevant animal welfare legislation, upon becoming responsible for the horses.

A glossary of key terms is available in Appendix A.

The guidelines may be updated from time to time. If you need more information, you can visit the department's website.

# **1. Declaration to comply with animal welfare standards**

To apply to become a rehomer, an applicant must declare they:

- will comply with their obligations at law in relation to the horses and animal welfare, including but not limited to the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*, *Exhibited Animals Protection Act 1986*, *the Animal Research Act 1985* and supporting regulations (as applicable to the context)
- are not on the Racing NSW Excluded List (or comparable list of an interstate authority).

Failure to do so may lead to ineligibility to participate, or to continue to receive horses under the program.

## **1.1 Complaints and communication with other bodies**

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service will refer any complaint or allegation of animal cruelty to RSPCA NSW. Similarly, complaints or allegations about other alleged breaches of the law concerning the handling or use of horses will be referred to NSW Police or relevant bodies. Complaints or allegations about mistreatment may result in immediate suspension or cancellation of the applicant's approval status in the program.

The RSPCA and other government bodies will also communicate and share information with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service in relation to participation of rehomers in the program.

## **2. Responsibility for welfare and ownership of horses**

Upon loading of the horses on the transportation date:

- the rehomer accepts all responsibility for the horses (and if pregnant, their offspring), including their care, welfare, transport, facilities and all associated costs and liabilities
- NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service is not responsible for the horses or their care, welfare, transport, facilities or costs and liabilities
- NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service is not liable for any future claim, cost, liability or loss arising out of, or in connection with, the horses.

The transportation date is the date on which the horses are loaded onto a transport vehicle and collected by the rehomer (or other person approved by the rehomer) at the NPWS temporary holding yards or other location specified by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

## **3. Application process**

To apply, an applicant must:

- a. satisfy the eligibility criteria at section 4 of the guidelines
- b. complete and submit an Application to be registered as a rehomer form.

### **3.1 Incomplete applications**

Incomplete applications will not be considered and will be returned.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service may request additional information from an applicant before assessment of an application proceeds.

### **3.2 Approved applications**

If approved by NPWS, an applicant becomes an approved rehomer. The rehomer:

- a. will be entered on the register of rehomers and is eligible to rehome horses under the program
- b. may submit a request for horses to NPWS using the *Feral horse rehomeing request form* on the department's website.

An approval is valid for a maximum of 12 months.

A rehomer will need to submit a new application to retain their approval status after the 12-month period.

For any new application, the rehomer will need to demonstrate they satisfy the eligibility criteria.

### **3.3 Refused applications**

If an application is refused, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service will advise the applicant in writing of the decision.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service reserves the right, at its full discretion, to refuse an application, or suspend, cancel or revoke any approval, or refuse any requests for horses, for any reason and at any time, including but not limited to:

- a. Changes in the program.
- b. Receiving advice from the RSPCA or other government and non-government entities that applicant may not be fit to participate in the program.
- c. If NPWS considers the applicant:
  - i. has failed to provide information, or has provided false or misleading information to NPWS
  - ii. has breached these guidelines
  - iii. has failed, or may fail, to comply with animal welfare standards or may otherwise put at risk the welfare of horses
  - iv. is convicted of any animal welfare related offence or other offence relating to the handling, care or use of horses
  - v. has failed to notify NPWS of any relevant change in circumstances since the most recent submission of an application to be a rehomer.

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## **4. Eligibility criteria**

Applicants must satisfy the following eligibility criteria to apply for the program:

- a. Make a valid application using the *Application to be registered as a rehome* form found on the department's website.
- b. The application is accompanied by:
  - i. a valid form of identification (a copy of your identification will be stored on secure department systems and will only be retained for the duration of your participation in the program)
  - ii. a written reference (dated no more than 3 months prior to the submission of the application) from a registered veterinary practitioner indicating that the applicant has experience in caring for horses
  - iii. sufficient information to demonstrate the applicant has the skills and experience necessary to train and handle unbroken (unstarted) horses.
- c. The applicant must declare they:
  - i. Upon loading of the horses on the transportation date, accept all responsibility for the horses (and if pregnant, their offspring), including their care, welfare and all associated costs and liabilities.
  - ii. If applying as an individual, are over the age of 18 years old.
  - iii. If applying as a company or other legal entity, have a valid legal status to operate as that entity.
  - iv. Have access to a property that meets the minimum facility requirements to rehome the horses (see Section 4) and will provide the Property Identification Code in the application.
  - v. Will comply with the transport and facilities requirements, including the minimum facilities requirements, outlined in section 5 below.
  - vi. Will comply with their obligations at law in relation to animal welfare, including but not limited to the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*, *Exhibited Animals Protection Act 1986*, *the Animal Research Act 1985* and supporting regulations (as applicable to the context).
  - vii. Have no prior convictions under animal welfare legislation (including but not limited to *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*, *Exhibited Animals Protection Act 1986*, *the Animal Research Act 1985* and supporting regulations).
  - viii. Are not on the Racing NSW Excluded List (or comparable list of an interstate authority).
  - ix. Have not been convicted for an offence involving fraud or dishonesty or been subject to an inquiry by ICAC (or an equivalent body in a jurisdiction in Australia) where a finding of corrupt conduct has been made within the previous 10 years.
  - x. Will submit an annual return. Noting the return is due 30 September annually, for all horses received from NPWS managed estate for the previous financial year. The annual return collects and aggregates data at a program level so that NPWS can identify the overall proportion of horses provided under the rehoming program that have been retained, euthanised, died or transferred (including by sale). The return is not intended to track the welfare or future movements of individual horses.
  - xi. For the purposes of completing the annual return, the applicant must retain information on the number of horses received, by horse type, which were retained, euthanised, died or transferred (including by sale).



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- d. The applicant must also:
- i. Agree that if their application is approved, their contact details will be published on the department's website, subject to their consent, to assist persons seeking to obtain horses.
  - ii. Advise if they will retain the horses; or transfer the horses to third parties, including through sale of the horses.
  - iii. Acknowledge the horses are wild and unhandled and as such have received no training, farriery, dental treatment, first aid or preventative health care, such as vaccinations and deworming. The horses may have undiagnosed or unidentified illnesses or injuries.
  - iv. Agree that any request for horses must be made for a minimum of 2 animals on each occasion.
  - v. Agree to collect horses in a timely and efficient manner within normal work-hours.
  - vi. Acknowledge when NPWS receives a request for horses NPWS will, as far as practicable, endeavour to meet any specific, reasonable requests from the applicant (e.g. sex or age of horses). However, NPWS will not meet requests for certain colours, physical appearance, temperament, source location within park or size of horses. Where it is not possible to meet the applicant's request, NPWS will select available animals for allocation to the applicant.

## 5. Requirements for transport and facilities

Upon loading of the horses on the transportation date, the rehomer accepts responsibility for the transport and facilities for the horses. NPWS is not liable for any future claim, cost, liability or loss arising out of, or in connection with, the transport or facilities of the horses.

The applicant must declare they will comply with the requirements below.

### 5.1 Transport

- a. The applicant will provide adequate transport for the horses from the NPWS temporary holding yard, or other location specified by NPWS, to the approved property. The applicant is responsible for any person approved by them to collect the horses.
- b. NPWS may inspect trailers, crates and trucks prior to transport and refuse loading if NPWS staff believe the trailer does not ensure the safe transport of the animals and/or it does not meet NPWS requirements or requirements of the *Australasian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines – Land Transport of Livestock* (Animal Health Australia 2012). Requirements include (Animal Health Australia 2012):
  - i. all vehicles must contain nonslip flooring and walls of sufficient strength to withstand horse activity
  - ii. there must be a vertical clearance of at least 2.2 m between the livestock floor crate and overhead structures
  - iii. electric prodders must not be used on horses during the transport process.
- c. All trailers and trucks must have a sliding rear gate.
- d. Maximum transport durations without unloading for a spell, food and water for most classes of horses is 12 hours from the location of pick up from NPWS (Animal Health Australia 2012).
  - i. maximum transport duration is reduced to 8 hours when ambient temperature along the transport route exceeds 30 degrees Celsius (Friend 2001; Weeks et al. 2012; Padalino 2015)
  - ii. additional transport duration restrictions apply for other classes of horses, for example, foals and heavily pregnant mares, in accordance with the *Australasian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines – Land Transport of Livestock* (Animal Health Australia 2012).
- e. Horses must be transported directly to the applicant's approved property.
- f. If horses are being transported via a truck without a full ramp, a suitable, accessible and well-maintained ramp must be available for unloading.

### 5.2 Facilities

- a. The applicant will provide proper and sufficient food, water, shelter, care and a safe, appropriate facility for containing the animals.
- b. The applicant will meet the following minimum facility requirements:

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### **5.2.1 Yarding (required on arrival)**

- a. 1.8 metre-high fences for an animal 2 years of age or older.
- b. 1.5 metre-high fences for a yearling.
- c. Fences constructed from metal or wood posts and rails.
- d. Minimum space of 12 square metres per adult horse, and 9 square metres per yearling or foal (NSW Agriculture 1996).
- e. Well-drained surface.
- f. Ability to have physical contact with other horses.
- g. Shade and/or shelter.

### **5.2.2 Paddocking (all horses will be paddocked as soon as possible after initial yarding)**

- a. Housed with at least one other horse (domestic horses may help with the transition).
- b. Standard stock fencing consisting of post and rail, conventional stock barrier, electric, or a combination. Fencing can be 1.2 to 1.5 m in height.
- c. Barbed wire-only fencing is not permitted.
- d. No more than 1 to 4 horses per 2 hectares (depending on pasture quality and availability) (NSW Department of Primary Industries 2007) are permitted.

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## **Appendix A – Definitions**

**Application** means *Application to be registered as a rehomer* form on the department's website.

**Minimum facility requirements** mean the requirements for yarding and paddocking specified in Section 5 of these guidelines.

**NPWS** means the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

**Program** means the National Parks and Wildlife Service Feral Horse Domestication (rehoming) Program.

**Park** means lands managed by NPWS.

**Rehomer** means a person approved by NPWS to receive horses under the program.

**Transportation date** means the date on which the horses are loaded onto a transport vehicle and collected by the rehomer (or other person approved by the rehomer) at the NPWS temporary holding yards or other location specified by NPWS.

## Appendix B – References

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