

**Horse Event Organisers Tool Kit**

SAMPLE

# **Horse Incident Management Plan**

Name of Event:

Date:

Location:

Responsible Person:

## Contents:

Introduction

Horse Incident Management Team

Horse Major Incident Operations Centre

Horse Incident Response Flow Chart

Action at the Site- Steps for Officials Responding to an Incident

Event Control Centre - Steps for Responding

Debrief

Management of the Media

Annexures:

A - SAMPLE Media Incident Information Form A - information to be established

B- SAMPLE Incident Report Form (Refer to Horse Event Organisers Tool Kit for additional example)

C - Media Q&A Sheet

## Acknowledgements

Don Crosby

Anthony Hatch NSW Fire & Rescue

*Equine Emergency Rescue* MaryAnne Leighton 2010

*Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue* Rebecca Gimenez, Tomas Gimenez, Kimberly A May 2008

© South Australian Endurance Riders Assoc (SA Branch) 2011

All or part of this document can be copied and distributed with permission from, and with acknowledgement of, the South Australian Endurance Riders Association. Although every effort has been made to ensure the correctness and accuracy of the information, no warranty express or otherwise is given.

### Disclaimer:

Although all reasonable care has been taken in preparing this information, neither the South Australian Horse Riders Association nor its officers accept any liability results from the interpretation or use of this information or in any accompanying document. This information is subject to change without notice.

Prepared by Horse SA [www.horsesa.asn.au](http://www.horsesa.asn.au)



## **Introduction**

This document is intended to provide guidance when an horse related incident occurs at the event that involves a rider, horse or member of the public. It is designed as a reference for establishing the personnel necessary to efficiently and effectively manage such incident and a procedural guide from the initial response through to the recording, reporting, media management, and debriefing process.

It is essential in the initial stages that, as far as anyone other than the immediately involved officials is concerned, an incident is not fatal. This means that all radio transmissions must be very carefully considered and whenever possible telephones are used to communicate.

There are varying degrees of incident all of which require some level of action therefore it is considered necessary to establish these levels on an agreed basis to enable an easy understanding of what is required in each case.

It has been agreed that we will use the following terminology and definitions to describe an incident.

### **Incident Definitions**

#### **Incident**

An incident is defined as where either rider or horse need medical or veterinary intervention but are both able to return to their stable unassisted.

#### **Serious Incident**

A serious incident is defined as an incident where either the horse or rider is unable to continue due to injuries sustained.

#### **Major Incident**

A major incident is defined as an incident where -:

- ❑ the injuries to the horse are such that it may need to be euthanased;
- ❑ the injuries to the rider, such as serious head or spinal injuries, are to the level that they may be life threatening; or
- ❑ a member of the public sustains an injury that can be deemed related to the actions of an official or competitor.

#### **Aim**

To ensure an appropriate, controlled and coordinated response to all levels of incident that will ensure the best possible outcome for those unfortunate enough to be involved in the incident and those who may witness it or be required to manage it.

## Horse Incident Management Team

### PERSONNEL (insert appointed personnel)

Title	Name	Mobile
Event Director/Chief Steward		
Logistics Officer		
Medical Officer / First Aider		
Veterinarian		
Veterinarian Support		
Nominated horse handler		
Horse Incident Safety Officer		
Equipment Officer		
Horse Ambulance Driver		
Incident Investigator		
Incident Photographer		
Horse Welfare Officer		
Human Welfare Officer		
Event Secretary		

**This group of people have taken part in training sessions to understand and execute their roles.**

**Horse Event Incident Controller (IC):** This is a critical role. This person is in charge of the incident scene; therefore you need someone who has been trained in incident response and scene management. The Incident Controller role oversees safety, operations, planning and logistics or works closely with others who have been delegated to undertake one or more of these roles. In the case of a Serious or Major Incident, the horse event IC will hand over to the emergency services IC on their arrival.

Immediately an incident occurs, the IC will assess the scene, identify risks, secure the area, appoint a horse handler for each horse involved, and determine if it is just first aid, or the ambulance, police or veterinarian that is required. The IC will also advise the event manager to stop the horse event as a whole or just one particular section, depending on the type and location of the incident.

The IC will request that screens are put in place around a horse that is down or visibility injured.

For horse event organisers, consider inviting a suitable local SES or off-duty police officer, army officer or other trained person to volunteer for this role with your event. You will need someone who is ready to help you plan and prepare for managing a potential incident.

The person will not be involved in tedious organising detail such as show class programming or ordering ribbons but will need to be free to coordinate key

responses with the event executive. They may be expected to organise specific event incident-planning sessions and, if possible, a training session at the event site itself.

Remember, the welfare of people comes before that of horses.

**Logistics Officer:** This person has access to information about the owner of the horse, the horse rider's personal details and next of kin contact details. They will have copies of any incident plans, site plans showing access/egress points, caterers and volunteers' contact numbers – in other words, all the administrative information related to the event.

For minor incidents not requiring emergency services' attendance, this person will work under the direction of the IC, supporting communication by relaying any messages, including public safety messages, to the ringmaster, PA system or stewards. Consider putting all event information on an iPad, charged and ready for use in the field. Event radios, mobile phones and other communication options are essential.

**Horse Event Safety Officer:** This person works under the direction of the IC to ensure people remain in the incident safety zones and, where possible, wear personal protective equipment (at the very least, riding helmets). Volunteers can be appointed on the day to support a Safety Officer with crowd control and incident zone boundary identification if required. In the case of a Serious Incident, the Horse Event Safety Officer will hand over to the emergency services Safety Officer on their arrival.

**Veterinary Support:** This is a volunteer who will assist the veterinarian by carrying his bag and/or equipment and taking care of his drugs and tools while he is attending a Serious Incident. This includes holding loaded syringes and disposing of used hypodermic needles in a sharps container. Previous veterinary nurse training is useful but not required. An ability to follow instructions from the IC and the veterinarian is essential.

**Nominated Horse Handler:** The nominated Horse Handler is an experienced person who is able to follow instructions instantly and work as part of a team. This person must be identified and nominated in advance of the event. With minor incidents, the Horse Handler is on hand to lead the horse back to its rider or to the float area. In more serious incidents the Horse Handler will work under the direction of the Incident Controller as part of a large team of emergency responders. A webbing or cotton head collar and very long lead are part of the Horse Handler's equipment.

The nominated Horse Handler in a Serious Incident or Major Incident is not the owner/horse rider who may also be injured or emotional. In these incidents the owner is required to observe changes in the horse's behaviour or condition and feed this information to the veterinarian and IC.

**Incident Reporter:** This person records aspects of the incident scene: the response, people involved in the incident, weather, time of day and general observations. This information will support a post-event incident report,

investigation or insurance claim and can be evaluated by the committee post event to look for ways to make improvements.

**Incident Photographer:** This person photographically records all aspects of the incident scene, the response and the surrounding aspects (sun, ground surface, hazards) to support information collected by the Incident Reporter. Ideally the reporter and photographer are two different people, but often this is not possible.

**Horse Ambulance and Driver:** Modern horse ambulances allow recumbent horses to be loaded and lie flat in the vehicle. Amongst many other features, they are equipped with an on-board sling, on-board winch, skids, exterior flood lights, veterinary equipment and fridges. Most horse events will only have access to a regular four wheel drive and float. The inside fittings of the float will need to be easily removed. Ideally the owner/driver volunteer should not have their own horse at the event.

**Horse Welfare Officer:** Increasingly, Horse Welfare Officers are being appointed for events and horse activities. Whilst their role is broad they will observe the incident response and management and provide advice if any welfare issues become apparent. Their biggest role may very well be after the incident to ensure that the horse is cared for appropriately and taken home or to an equine clinic in a timely manner.

**Human Welfare Officer:** The appointed Member Protection Officer/Child Safe Officer for the club or event should have the skills to also be on standby to provide general human welfare services. In consultation with the IC and Police, they may call in further professional counseling support if needed when a serious or major incident occurs. The Human Welfare Officer needs to have at hand list of appropriately qualified available Counsellors, list of appropriate international telephone numbers (if appropriate) according to competitors, list of Rider and Officials emergency or next of kin phone numbers including alternatives to hand to police if required. The Officer will also enquire as to the well being of riders who are in hospital and see that the needs of remaining family & grooms are met.

**Equipment Officer and Equipment:** This volunteer will need to source a range of items to have ready to use should an incident occur. Equipment may include:

1. High visibility vests, safety helmets and gloves
2. Webbing/cotton head collar and very long lead with extra-strong snap hook for the handler
3. Several tarpaulins or sheets for lying equipment out on, or to use for shade or shelter. At least one must be big enough to fully cover a deceased horse
4. Blankets for wrapping people in, protecting a horse from further injury, padding and protection uses
5. Lengths of 18 M x 38 mm webbing rescue straps for dragging a horse or rolling a horse over

6. A lunging whip for pulling rescue straps under a recumbent horse's body
7. A couple of poles with hooks, brooms or a walking stick with a hook top to help manoeuvre ropes or items near a horse that may be thrashing about or in a confined space.
8. Containment fencing
9. Screen/s
10. Torches and battery powered radio

**Media/Communications:** The event media liaison person will play a key role in communication of information about the incident to the spectators and media. Statements can be prepared in advance relating to event cancellation and such topic areas as serious injury or death of a horse rider or horse.

The media spokesperson for the event is generally the most senior representative available from the event organizing committee, normally the President or Event Chairperson. It cannot be the Incident Controller or other role directly involved in management of an incident.

The media liaison officer will prepare information about the incident and, with approval of the President or Event Chairperson, undertake such tasks as information for PA announcements, arrangement of interviews, posting of Internet information on the official event website and may arrange more general short notice briefings for key personnel.

The Media Manager needs to have in hand;

- ❑ general office stationery
- ❑ copies of the program, schedule and other event information
- ❑ relevant rider and / or horse biographies (if not available, a copy of entry form)
- ❑ previous event results
- ❑ history of event, including numbers of any previous major incidents
- ❑ general facts and figures

*The Event Director or nominated person (e.g. Event Committee President) will make incident statements to the media. **No other persons are to make statements to the Media unless authorised.** The Media Manager will contact the press and request that they do not annoy the hospital and advise them that a press conference is being prepared.*

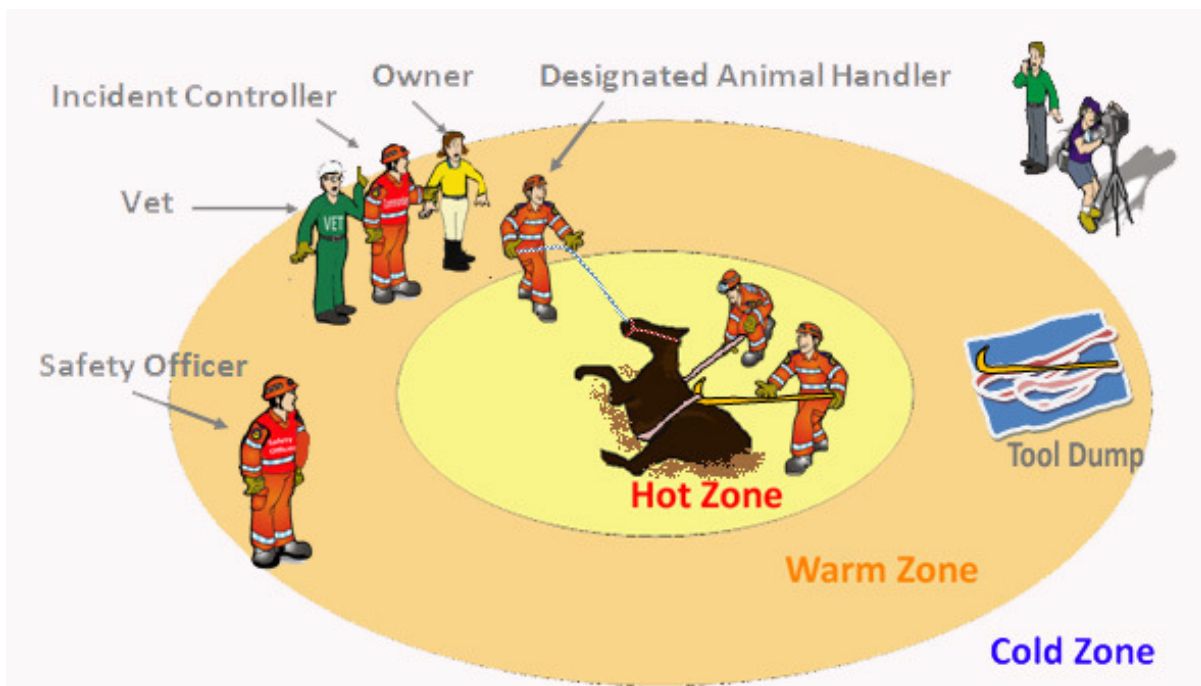


Image credit NSW Fire & Rescue

## Horse Major Incident Operations Centre

For a larger event, this room would support a range of incident responses, including a biosecurity threat. It is in addition to a normal “control centre” as run at three day events, large shows or many endurance rides. This room is separate, as it could be that the control centre may continue running the event after a major incident has been attended to, however officials in the incident operations centre have remaining reporting tasks to complete.

The room or area needs to be set up as an office as well equipped as possible, with power, communications, desktops, maps and information about the courses, access to event participant information. A person will need to be responsible for the pre-event preparation of this room.

It should be established in a secure, quiet area where it is difficult to be overheard. If necessary have a person posted on the door to maintain security. At most events, it may be the secretaries room that prepared in advance, and is taken over should a serious or major incident need an operations centre.

Keep records of all activities including telephone calls and questions and answers.  
 Use telephones when possible and radios only to request personal attendance as radios can be overheard.

## Action at the Site – Steps for Officials Responding to an Incident

An incident is defined as where either rider or horse need medical or veterinary intervention but are both able to return to their stable unassisted. This guideline has been prepared to assist Stewards and Officials in the event of an incident.

### THE WELFARE OF INJURED PERSONS/HORSES IS PARAMOUNT

#### Steps:

1. Identify yourself as an Official, to those at the scene.
2. Undertake an initial risk assessment
3. Call the Event Control Centre (or other Official as pre-arranged) to alert the Event Director to the situation giving an exact location. The Event Director will action the Horse Incident Response Plan if needed, and call in the First Aider and/or Veterinarian to the scene. For a minor incident where the rider & horse can walk away, it is unlikely the Plan will be actioned.
4. (If the situation is SERIOUS or MAJOR, use an agreed term e.g. "Code Green" or other term rather than provide a graphic description)
5. Arrange easy and immediate access to the injured by the first aider or veterinarian
6. Make sure any approaching competitors (e.g. on a cross country or endurance ride course) have been stopped. Call for assistance to control a loose horse if needed.
7. Give the Event Control Centre a situation report over the radio including -:
  - ⇒ Identify rider by number,
  - ⇒ Condition of rider and horse,
  - ⇒ Condition of obstacles or other property damage and
  - ⇒ Estimated time to clear the area
8. Ensure the radio is monitored at all times.
9. Keep "sightseers" out of the area and discreetly stand between any cameras and the injured if possible.
10. After the incident has been managed, check the course section in your area of responsibility, in order that an "all clear" can be provided so that the competition can continue.

If the Horse Incident Response Plan is to be actioned, then

- Allow for the Horse Incident Response personnel to undertake their roles on arrival, including screening the scene.

- Keep an eye out for emergency services

**Reports** Make some notes in case an Incident Reporter requires your input into a report.

## Event Control Centre Responses

- ❑ Radio operator to advise the Event Director/Chief Steward and monitor incoming information
- ❑ Event Director/ Chief Steward Action the Horse Incident Response Plan if required
- ❑ Event Director/Chief Steward to direct nearest First Aid / Doctor and/or Veterinarian to respond.
- ❑ Depending on situation and report from the Incident Controller, the Event Director/Chief Steward to direct stopping of any following competitors or following or adjacent events.
- ❑ The Event Director / Chief Steward may direct all communications to occur via telephone if that is more appropriate and maintain an open line between the scene and the Control Centre.
- ❑ Upon receiving advice of clearance from the Incident Controller and “course clear” from a responsible steward for the area involved, the Event Director/Chief Steward will direct event recommencement.

**NOTE** No incident is fatal at the scene and **telephone communication is strongly recommended** as more appropriate for secure message passing.

## Reports

For every incident, however minor, the Officials involved should complete an Incident/Accident Report Form.

Serious and Major incidents will require reports for the national sporting organisation

In the case of a human fatality there will be a Police investigation. The Incident Investigator will need to work with the Police on the day to support gathering of information.

Stewards, radio operator and other attending officials may need to be replaced and taken to a quiet area where they will be required to write statements. Any other experienced horse people, who witnessed the accident, should also be asked to make statements.

Counselling will be made available if required to all those officials who attended, witnessed or are affected by the incident.

Reports will also need to be prepared for the Event insurance company and potentially for the insured horse.

## **Debrief**

Before dispersing, the Horse Incident Response Team should hold an internal incident debrief to confirm in everyone's minds precisely what happened and to arrange how to progress.

Agree upon a spokesperson to liaise with any other Investigation Committee and prepare a complete incident dossier including all relevant paperwork.

The Human Welfare Officer may arrange contacts for counseling.

## **Management of the Media**

### ***Immediate Response***

The Event President/Event Director should:

- ❑ Issue a holding statement (see Media Draft A).
- ❑ Use only this holding statement in dealing with telephone enquiries; avoid being drawn into long telephone conversations but offer to - fax the full press statement once it is prepared.
- ❑ Announce any press conference proposal by word of mouth and by notice on any press notice board.
- ❑ Secure relevant rider / horse biography using Information Form A In the case of a horse fatality, establish if the rider/owner is prepared to / able to meet the press and if they have a positive outlook on the incident.

NB: Avoid being too optimistic over start time for press conference. Allow time to gather all necessary information, but try to start within 30 / 40 minutes of the incident

### **Prepare Press Statement**

A press statement should be prepared with the assistance of the Media Manager and following the Media Draft B form wherever possible.

Once drafted:

- ❑ It will be read most carefully, in particular to check that an inadvertent admission of liability has not been made
- ❑ Approval from the President, Event Director / Chief Steward, Medical Officer and Veterinarian should be sought but the temptation to make wholesale changes to the basic format should be resisted. It should be kept short.

- ❑ Other essential contacts should be aware of its contents especially relatives of the affected rider and/or horse owner.
- ❑ The future spokesperson's name and contact number will appear at the bottom.

### ***Press Conference***

It is preferable to organise a formal media conference in a suitable, quiet secure environment.

The media will be addressed by the Event Director/President who will arrange for additional personnel, eg: Doctor, Veterinarian, Course Designer, Chief Steward and Incident Investigator and able to answer technical questions.

The conference will be as brief as possible with the 'ground rules', outlined at the outset

- ❑ the statement will be read
- ❑ questions will be taken
- ❑ personal interviews will be arranged (preference to be given to equestrian media)

The press may ask about the dimensions of any obstacles at which the accident happened. This information should be avoided as a member of the press may dispute your descriptions.

*A suggested reply to avoid this is:*

- ❑ The course is designed within the dimensions specified by the rules and no details will be discussed before the Coroner's inquest.
- ❑ Try to avoid saying how many horses had successfully completed the course before the accident (it smacks of a whitewash) but be prepared for a question and work out how many.

While the press conference is under way, an attendance list should be prepared.

### ***Distribution of Press Statement***

In addition to its distribution at the press conference, the statement should also go to the following to ensure the accuracy of any other media outlet releases.

- ❑ non-attending horse media press
- ❑ news editors of national and relevant regional daily newspapers.
- ❑ editors of relevant regional weekly newspapers
- ❑ news editors of national and relevant regional radio and TV stations
- ❑ local police and emergency services
- ❑ the event's legal and insurance advisors
- ❑ the event venue owners and sponsor(s)
- ❑ local authorities
- ❑ animal and welfare organisations

ANNEXURE A: SAMPLE **Media Incident Information Form A** - information to be established.

**1. Rider or public fatality / serious injury**

Mr / Mrs / Miss Name \_\_\_\_\_

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

From where? \_\_\_\_\_

Based where? \_\_\_\_\_

Married? Yes / N Children Yes / No If yes, how many? .

**2 Horse**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_  
gelding/mare/stallion

Owner \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Additional information**

Vet attending \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor(s) attending \_\_\_\_\_

Fence Judge(s) \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Nature of Incident**

Time occurred \_\_\_\_\_

Fence number/area (eg grandstand) \_\_\_\_\_

What happened? (fact not hearsay) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How many injured? \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Injuries**

Rider \_\_\_\_\_

Horse \_\_\_\_\_

Member of the public\_\_\_\_\_

**6. How is incident being handled**

Hospital name\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Have witness statements been taken**

Yes / No

**8. Background**

How many horses had completed the course prior to incident?\_\_\_\_\_

Had this rider competed earlier on another horse?\_\_\_\_\_

How many completed the course?\_\_\_\_\_

How many first timers had completed the course prior to the incident?\_\_\_\_\_

How many riders had retired?\_\_\_\_\_

**9. Other consequences – *NB: not for media publication***

Do you have any opinion as to the cause? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any opinion as to fault?\_\_\_\_\_

In your opinion was there any breach of safety?\_\_\_\_\_

Check whether the rider has won any prizes on another horse – it could prevent embarrassment at the prize giving.

**10. Prognosis**

If injuries, what is expected result?\_\_\_\_\_

## **Media draft A:-**

Suggested initial response or holding statement to be released/authorised only by the Committee Chairperson.

“I am aware that an incident has occurred and our Horse Incident Management Team are investigating the facts surrounding the incident at this time.

I will be making a full statement as soon as I have all the information necessary to be able to make an assessment of the facts.

The full statement release will be made as soon as possible, as will the conduct of a press conference.”

In the event of a rider fatality the following should be added to the statement :-

“A rider has suffered critical injuries and has been taken to hospital. Further information will follow, however, the next of kin must be informed before any statement is released.”

NB: Replies, either written or verbal, should be:

- Calm
- objective
- clear and factual
- brief
- responsible and concerned

**Media draft B** – Press statement and subsequent press releases to be structured as follows:

**1. Public or rider fatality**

It is with the deepest regret that we announce that Mr/Mrs/Miss \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_(first and last names) suffered a fatal accident while

competing/spectating at the .....(insert name of event).....,

at \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm on \_\_\_\_\_(date).

\_\_\_\_\_(first name) aged \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_(home town) was/was not married, with \_\_children.

\_\_\_\_\_'s(first name) horse \_\_\_\_\_, owned by

\_\_\_\_\_, a \_\_\_\_\_ year old gelding/mare/stallion \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_(description of incident, eg stumbled and fell ).

\_\_\_\_\_(first name) was \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(eg: thrown off the horse which, in falling, struck the rider's head, causing fatal injuries)

A further media release / press conference will be made at ..... am/pm at .....

..... on / /

Further information will be released by .....

Signed ..... Committee Chairperson

A standard paragraph should be included, along the lines of one of these:

“At every equestrian event the maximum consideration is given to the safety and welfare of horses and competitors.

“Mr/Mrs/Miss \_\_\_\_\_ (Event Director / Chief Steward) said:  
On behalf of the whole sport, I would like to extend our deepest sympathy to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ ‘s(first name) family”

OR

"On the extremely rare occasions a rider suffers a fatal accident at an equestrian event; it is a tragic loss.

The thoughts and prayers of equestrians all over the world are with her/his family at this sad time."

## 2. Horse fatality

It is with great sadness that we announce that \_\_\_\_\_(horse's name),

ridden by \_\_\_\_\_ and owned by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ was humanely destroyed/put down as a result of a

accident while competing at the .....( insert name of event)..... at

\_\_\_\_\_ am/pm on \_\_\_\_\_ (date).

\_\_\_\_\_ (horse's name), a \_\_\_\_\_ year old

gelding/mare/stallion \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(description of incident and injury, eg: stumbled and fell and suffered .....)

**Again, do not mention the dimensions of any obstacle.**

## Annexure B Sample Incident Report Form

Date of incident \_\_\_\_\_ Time of incident/Arrival at incident \_\_\_\_\_

Location of incident \_\_\_\_\_

Name & number of competitor \_\_\_\_\_

Name & address of injured person \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name & address of any witness \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Details of any evidence eg video etc. \_\_\_\_\_

Your observations \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Any opinion you may have \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Your name, address, contact phone and event role \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please sketch the incident scene on the reverse showing the location of persons, horses, structures, barriers and fences and include approximate distances

**Once completed please hand to the Horse Incident Investigator**

## **Annexure C: Media Q&A Sheet**

Sample Media questions that can be expected together with suggested answers: -

### **1. Cruelty**

Q There is gathering opinion that these events are cruel to horses. Do you agree?

A At every equestrian event, the maximum consideration is given to the safety and welfare of both horse and rider.

### **2. Bad weather**

Q Do you think the event should have been stopped (sooner) because of the weather?

A Conditions are constantly monitored by the Event Director / Chief Steward and the Event Committee. Had they considered that the conditions were not safe, they would have made the decision to halt the event with the utmost speed.

### **3. Money**

Q Isn't it fair to say you are more interested in the gate receipts than the animals welfare?

A No, It isn't fair to say that - extensive insurance policies taken out before the event cover all aspects of income, including gate receipts.

### **4. Danger**

Q Doesn't this incident prove that the sport is too dangerous?

A Equestrian events are a challenge to the combined skills of both the horse and rider. To meet those challenges successfully requires the same input of patience and talent that is needed in any other walk of life

Q Isn't the course too dangerous? Isn't it time they were made less severe?

A The course is designed to present a fair challenge of skills. Experienced course designers set out to ask realistic questions of horse and rider.

### **5. Request for detail**

Q What exactly happened out there? What caused the incident?

A I don't have the full details at this time. You will be given a further briefing when our investigations are completed.

## **Briefing of riders**

At the riders briefing, they should be told simply how to cope with approaches by the media in adverse situations. A suggested response might be:-

“I cannot comment at the moment, but I understand all the facts are being gathered for a press statement by the Event Director.”