

Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries



**Global Federation of
Animal Sanctuaries**

Standards for Equine Rescues and Sanctuaries

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INTRODUCTION

GFAS PRINCIPLES

The Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) will designate an organization as “accredited” or “verified” based upon its substantial compliance with the standards listed below.

Consistent with GFAS’ philosophy and the standards below, it is expected that a sanctuary does not adopt policy positions that are in opposition to the welfare of the species of animals in the care of the sanctuary (for example, while it is not **required** that a sanctuary promote a policy against horse slaughter, it should not promote a policy in favor).

Note: Several standards make reference to a sanctuary’s “Director.” GFAS recognizes that a sanctuary may use a different title, and the term “Director” is intended to reference the sanctuary’s Sanctuary Director, who may be called an Executive Director or Chief Executive Officer, etc. Also, although the terms “rescue” and “sanctuary” are sometimes used interchangeably throughout the document, in general in the equine field, the two terms are differentiated by whether or not an organization provides for the adoption of domestic equine.

GFAS also recognizes that sanctuaries may rely on volunteers for certain functions, including some aspects of animal care (such as feed preparation). Standards referencing “caregiver” may take into account appropriately qualified and trained volunteers as well as paid staff.

Further guidance/suggestions on facility design and equine care can be found on the GFAS website www.sanctuaryfederation.org. These are not requirements but rather provide rescues/sanctuaries with access to knowledge gained from experience at other equine care facilities.

ANIMALS COVERED BY THESE STANDARDS

1. Family / Genus / Common Names

- a. **Family:** Equidae
- b. **Genus/Species/Common Names:**

Genus	Species	Common Names
Equus	africanus	African wild ass, African ass
Equus	ferus	Przewalski’s horse, Asian wild horse, Mongolian wild horse
Equus	ferus caballus	domestic horse
Equus	grevyi	Grevy’s zebra
Equus	hemoionus	Asiatic wild ass, Asian wild ass, kulan, onager
Equus	kiang	Kiang



Equus	quagga	Plains zebra, Burchell's zebra, common zebra, painted zebra
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Version Updates:

New and Updated content released on February 2015

- G-1 Nonprofit/ Non-Commercial Status, P-3 Disposition Ethics and Responsibility, P-4 Disposition of Live Equines, P-7 Euthanasia

Clarification released on March 2014

- S-2 Security and Emergency Coverage – see Appendix I

New and Changed content released on July 2015

- V-7 Breeding/Contraception – section a.

New and Updated content released on July 2019

- P-1 Adoptions, P-2 Foster Care Placements

INTRODUCTION

The Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) will designate an organization as “verified” or “accredited” based upon its substantial compliance with the standards listed below.

GFAS notes that there may be other acceptable ways of meeting the intent of each standard, aside from those detailed below, and that in some instances there may be legal, cultural or other significant barriers to meeting GFAS requirements.

The standards are considered mandatory, but GFAS will consider specific exceptions to some of the listed requirements. GFAS encourages sanctuaries to offer feedback on the standards and to explain any reasons why it believes it cannot meet a particular standard, or why the standard is not applicable and/or appropriate to its situation. Sanctuaries are also welcome to indicate a timeline for meeting a standard if the standard is not yet met at the time of application for Accreditation or for Verification.

The exceeding of the standards is encouraged. In addition to meeting these standards, an organization is expected to comply with all applicable international, national, state/province, and local laws and regulations.

Definitions

Sanctuary. GFAS recognizes that some organizations operate valid rescue and rehabilitation programs with a goal of releasing wildlife to the wild pursuant to IUCN and/or other international or national standards. For those animals, lifetime sanctuary care may not be part of the organization’s mission. While the care for these animals may be provided on an interim basis only, the organization is still expected to meet the standards below with regard to all animals in its care and for purposes of these standards it will be identified as a “sanctuary.”



Director. Several standards make reference to a sanctuary's "Director." GFAS recognizes that a sanctuary may use a different title, and the term "Director" is intended to reference the sanctuary's Sanctuary Director, who may be called an Executive Director or Chief Executive Officer, etc.

Personnel. GFAS also recognizes that sanctuaries may rely on volunteers for certain functions, including some aspects of animal care (such as food preparation). Standards referencing "personnel" may take into account appropriately qualified and trained volunteers as well as employees.

Adoptions. Equine adoption is a process whereby legal ownership of an animal is transferred from a rescue or sanctuary organization to a new home.

Foster Care Placements. Equine foster care placements are a process whereby legal ownership of an animal is not transferred, but the responsibilities of the rescue/sanctuary and the foster placement are specified.



EQUINE STANDARDS

EQUINE HOUSING

H-1 Types of Space and Size

Unless otherwise directed by a veterinarian, equines are provided sufficient opportunity and space to exercise daily and have freedom of movement to reduce stress and maintain good physical condition.

General

- a. Habitat and living conditions seek to meet the physiological, social and psychological needs of equines.
- b. The physical space provides opportunities for the equine to roam, graze, play, roll and interact with other equines.
- c. Facility design takes into account caregiver and equine safety.
- d. The habitat provides security from predators and unauthorized human access.

Pasture and Open Space Settings

- e. Pasture provides primary housing, freedom of movement, and allows socializing. Grazing opportunity is provided, with some exceptions for desert terrain. Grazing up to 20 hours per day is normal. Pastures have sufficient area per animal to accommodate normal individual and group behavior. Population density normally allows for 1 acre per individual to provide freedom of movement and 2 acres per individual if pasture is designed to be a major source of nutrition as well as activity.
- f. Where release to pasture or open spaced areas is not possible, equines are exercised, as appropriate, through line work, riding, etc., unless a veterinarian or other expert instructs otherwise for health reasons.
- g. Design allows for regular inspection of animals and facility maintenance as needed.
- h. Where pasture or open space settings are the primary housing, the following are also provided:
 - Shade and man-made shelter which provides protection during inclement and extreme weather. See Standard H-5.
 - Alternate housing for sick, injured or compromised individuals.
 - Enclosure is designed to allow all animals with physical limitations easy access to water, feed sources and shelters.



Paddocks/ Yards and Dry Lots

- i. Paddocks, yards and dry lots (including designated quarantine enclosure) provide sufficient space for natural activities but are also designed to allow caregivers to monitor each individual animal on a daily basis.
- j. Many factors influence the minimum space required for a group of equines including, but not limited to; group size, group composition, and enclosure terrain. Facilities should provide as much space as is possible and/or practical.
- k. Rescues and sanctuaries meeting only the minimum requirements for enclosure space employ additional enrichment, focusing on physical and mental exercise to compensate for reduced space. The use of a rotation system, which allows groups and/or individual equines to regularly spend time in a larger or different space, is utilized to rest pasture (where applicable), increase enrichment and encourage activity.
- l. The design of outdoor paddocks, yards and dry lot enclosures includes:
 - Shade and man-made shelter which provides protection during inclement and extreme weather. See Standard H-5.
 - Alternate housing for sick, injured or compromised individuals.
 - Separate area for introduction of new individual to a group or temporary isolation of an equine for health or social reasons or weight management.

Indoor Housing/Barns/Stalls

- m. Indoor housing provides secure shelter and protection for equines during inclement weather as needed. Indoor housing also provides alternate temporary placement for sick, injured and compromised animals. Room dimension is dependent on intended purpose and/or duration of confinement. Indoor spaces are large enough to allow all animals to comfortably move around and to lie down.
 - The ability of equines to rear up on their hind legs is taken into consideration in the placement of lights, fans, plumbing, etc.
 - Separated animals have visual access to group members.

H-2 Containment

Equines are safely contained.

General

- a. All enclosures are designed, constructed and maintained to securely and safely.
 - Sharp edges are minimized, and fencing is clearly visible to the equines.



- b. Enclosures are designed to allow for proper, safe cleaning and drainage.
- c. A regular program of property and facility maintenance is in place.
- d. Containment fencing for incoming studs, recently gelded males and aggressive or fearful equine are in good condition and able to safely prevent escapes.
- e. Equines do not have access to cattle guards.

Outdoor Enclosures/Pasture/Dry lot

- f. Perimeter containment of outdoor areas is constructed so as to deter predators if applicable.
- g. Fences and enclosures are inspected daily to ensure safety and effectiveness is maintained.
- h. Barbed wire is not used to contain equines.
- i. A variety of building materials can be used provided they are able to withstand equine strength and safely contain the animals.
- j. The supporting posts for fences are firmly fixed into the ground. Metal T-posts used as supporting posts for fences must have safety caps.
- k. Fence material is sufficiently secured to supporting posts in such a way that the weight of the equines could not detach it from the support nor dislodge the supporting posts.
- l. Gates and doors are at least as strong and as effective in containing the equines as the rest of the enclosure barriers. In particular, gates and doors are designed and maintained so as to prevent animals from lifting them from their hinges or unfastening the securing device.
- m. Dimensions
 - Maximum of 2 in. x 2 in. (5 cm x 5 cm), 4-6-gauge field fencing, if used.
 - Minimum vertical dimension of 4 ft. (1.2 m).
 - 6 ft. (1.8 m) for non-domestic equines.
 - Bottom rail is 8-12 inches from the ground surface.

Electric Fencing

- a. Electric wire, braid or tape is visibly marked.
- b. Safety signs on electric wire are visible to caregivers and bystanders.

Barns/Stalls and Yards/Paddocks

- c. Walls between stalls are constructed of wood or other synthetic, non-toxic wood substitutes.
- d. Walls are of sufficient strength to contain equines.



- e. Stall doors and gates are of sufficient size (at least 4 feet wide) to allow safe passage of equines.
- f. Stall doors and gates are constructed and engineered to prevent any protrusions that may cause injury.

H-3 Ground and Plantings

Ground surfaces indoors and out are healthy for equines. Plantings are appropriate and safe.

Vegetation

- a. Any vegetation capable of harming equines is kept out of reach.
- b. Trees within or near animal enclosures are regularly inspected, trimmed or felled as necessary to avoid equines being harmed by falling branches, toxicity, or trauma.

Outdoor enclosures/pasture/paddocks

- c. All outdoor enclosures/pastures have a natural substrate (e.g. soil, sand, grass) that provide good drainage with a dry area that can be raked free of debris.
- d. Where possible, pasture includes safe, living vegetation free of large holes, obstructions and debris.
- e. Where possible, natural pasture is available to provide equines with grazing opportunities and natural resting surfaces.

Indoor enclosures/barns/stalls

- f. Stall floor surfaces are dirt or clay. Where manmade substances replace natural dirt or clay surfaces, the surface should be smooth but not slippery; with cement surfaces, rubber mats (or an adequate alternative) is used.
- g. Stalls are designed to accommodate an adequate depth of litter substrate for drainage and cushioning.
 - Bedding materials suitable for equines (including but not limited to; wood shavings, straw, sawdust, shredded cardboard and commercial bedding products) are provided in sufficient amount/depth to provide adequate cushion and absorption.



H-4 Gates and Doors

Equine enclosure gates and doors are appropriately designed to ensure both animal and human health and safety.

General

- a. Gates and doors are a key element of facility design. Gates and doors are at least as effective in containing equines as the rest of the enclosure fencing.
- b. Large enclosure/pasture fence lines include at least one drive-in access point for emergency access.
- c. Gates and doors are of sufficient size to allow safe passage of equines and necessary vehicles and equipment.
- d. Gates and doors are designed to remain functional under all circumstances, are maintained in good working order and free from any encumbrances that may prevent opening and closing.
- e. Doors and door hardware are maintained to ensure proper functioning.

H-5 Shelter

Equines have access to man-made shelter that provides each individual with protection from extreme weather (including, but not limited to, prevailing wind, snow, sleet, rain, sun, and temperature extremes).

- a. Equines have space to seek refuge from sun, wind, inclement weather and enclosure mates.
- b. Shade and shelter are provided in multiple locations within enclosures to ensure that all animals have access throughout the day, taking into account social structure and relationships within the herd.
- c. Shade can be created through natural and artificial means including shade trees and man-made structures.
- d. Man-made shelter areas provide sufficient dry space during wet weather, as well as protection from wind, to allow all equines to turn around, lie down and move freely.
Man-made shelter is constructed or modified to allow free airflow.



H-6 Sanitation

Proper sanitation is practiced to reduce pathogen transmission.

General

- a. Local, county, state laws regarding proper waste removal are observed.
- b. Enclosures are designed to promote sanitation and maintenance as appropriate for the health and well-being of the equines
- c. Uneaten perishable feed is removed within a timeframe appropriate for the type of feed and size of enclosure, prior to molding or contamination.

Removal of Animal Waste

- d. Animal waste is removed from the enclosure as often as necessary, to minimize disease hazards and to reduce odors.
- e. Soiled bedding material and substrate are removed and replaced with fresh materials daily, or as needed to Damaged and soiled enrichment items are removed regularly.

Tools

- f. Tools are labeled when use is restricted to specific areas such as quarantine and foaling barns. Sanitation tools or equipment, including wheelbarrows, are not used for transport or storage of foodstuffs or bedding.

Cleaning and Disinfection

- g. Feeding areas, automatic water devices, water and feed containers are cleaned and disinfected as needed.
- h. Disinfectants are used in well-ventilated areas and label instructions for proper use and safety are observed.
- i. All hard surfaces including walls, floors, ceilings, sinks, wash stalls and work areas are sanitized regularly to the extent possible
- j. Cleaning and disinfection standard operating procedures are developed and followed.
- k. Safety Data Sheets or equivalent are readily available for all cleaning products in use and all containers are properly labeled as to contents.



H-7 Temperature, Humidity, Ventilation, Lighting

Temperature, humidity, ventilation, and lighting are appropriately addressed.

- a. The temperature is within an acceptable range for the health and age of equine housed.
 - Weather is considered in addition to temperature as wind and rain reduce the temperature range that can be comfortably tolerated.
- b. Equines have access to shelter or shade when ambient temperature falls below 30°F (-1.1°C) [50°F (10°C) for zebra], adjusted for wind chill, or rises above 75°F (23.8°C). All animals are provided with access to dry, well-bedded space. Caution is taken with elderly, young and compromised equines.
 - Equines are prevented from having direct contact with heat sources. Note: Infrared bulbs or 'heat lamps' are not recommended as heat sources due to risks associated with fires and injury.
- c. Windbreaks are sufficient in number to accommodate all animals simultaneously with consideration for social structure and relationships in a group.
- d. Shade is available throughout the day in a number of areas and space is adequate to accommodate all animals simultaneously with consideration for social structure and relationships within the herd.
- e. Proper ventilation of indoor enclosures is maintained, yet barns/stalls are not drafty. Ventilation is provided via heat recovery ventilators, energy recovery ventilators or proper window and door placement.
- f. Natural lighting is optimal, and is provided via skylights, windows, roll-up doors or other means.
- g. Supplemental lighting is provided as needed to ensure adequate light, both day and night, for caregivers to observe animals, clean enclosures and perform related animal care tasks.
- h. Supplemental lighting is available for use in outdoor areas in event of an emergency.

NUTRITION REQUIREMENTS

N-1. Water

Fresh clean water is available in sufficient quantity.

Quantity

- a. Fresh clean water is available at all times to all individuals. Equines being trained, worked, ridden or transported are provided water as often as necessary to ensure their health and comfort.
- b. Multiple water sources are available for group-housed equines to ensure high-ranking individuals do not dominate water sources.

Quality

- c. Water quality parameters are maintained at a generally acceptable level for equines in terms of turbidity, salts, etc.
- d. Potable water sources are tested for contaminants annually.
- e. All water sources (including water buckets, troughs and tubs) are cleaned as often as needed to maintain high quality of water.
- f. If automatic water devices are not used, all water sources (including water buckets, troughs and tubs) are appropriate for equines and safely positioned to minimize spillage and accidents.
 - Care is taken to ensure that water is available at all times.
 - In cold climates water is kept free of ice during winter months. Where heat sources/defrosters are used to prevent water from freezing, wiring is secured out of any equine's reach.
 - In hot climates, water sources are shaded or changed multiple times to avoid overly hot water.
 - A written schedule confirms adequate attention to water availability in hot and cold climates.

Automatic Water Devices

- g. Devices are tested daily to ensure water is available.
- h. When monitoring of water consumption is required, an alternative means of providing water is devised or the float on the automatic water device is disabled.
- i. In colder climates, steps are taken (such as installation of heat sources) to ensure water consumption does not decrease with lower ambient air temperatures. Wiring for such devices is kept out of equine reach.
- j. In warmer climates, steps are taken to ensure temperature in automatic water devices remains temperate.



N-2. Diet

A properly balanced and healthy diet is provided based on the needs of each equine following veterinary instructions for special needs.

General

- a. A veterinarian or qualified nutritionist periodically reviews all aspects of equine diets at the rescue/sanctuary.
- b. Diets of individual equines (including supplements) are of a quality and quantity the based on age, life stage and condition of the individual.
 - Malnourished equines are provided with an appropriate, veterinarian approved re-feeding diet.
 - Diets of pregnant or lactating mares are adjusted as needed to meet their increased nutritional needs.
- c. Feed is wholesome, palatable, and free from contamination and of sufficient quantity and nutritive value to maintain all animals in good health.
- d. Each equine's daily dietary needs are documented and made available to caregivers.
- e. In open space enclosures/pastures, routine observation of feeding activity ensures all animals are able to access sufficient feed.

Forage

- f. Forage is the basis of the equine diet. Equines ingest 1.5% to 3% of their body weight each day and at least half of their diet should be forage, such as hay, pasture or hay products.
- g. Where natural forage is insufficient in quality or quantity, quality hay and or hay products are used to supplement the diet.
- h. Equine caregivers are trained as needed to identify safe, non-toxic plant species appropriate to feed.

Commercially Milled Grains

- i. A mixed grain diet may be offered as part of a balanced diet that includes sufficient pasture, hay and hay products, to meet the specific ration needs of an individual equine. The grain portion of an equine's diet should never exceed 50% by weight of an equines total daily ration. Pelleted and extruded feeds provide an alternative to traditional grains.
- j. Special grain mixtures such as "complete or senior feeds" are considered for geriatric equines (greater than 20 years of age) who have difficulty maintaining body



condition. All diet changes are considered in consultation with the primary veterinarian or equine nutritionist.

Supplements

- k. Prior to offering supplements (including vitamins and minerals), the health and condition of the individual equine, as well as the total diet, is reviewed by a nutritionist experienced in equine care and/or the attending veterinarian.

N-3. Feed Presentation and Feeding Techniques

Feed is presented appropriately based on the needs of each individual equine.

General

- a. Feeding and drinking receptacles are placed in positions that minimize the risks of contamination from soiling by the equines themselves, wild birds, rodents and other potentially invasive species.
- b. Feed receptacles are appropriate for the species housed in terms of number, size and placement, and are cleaned as needed.
- c. Receptacles for animal feed and water are designed to minimize spillage and are not used for any other purpose.
- d. To reduce waste, potential contamination and the risk of colic or disease/parasite transmission, equines are not fed grain on the ground.
- e. Equines are offered their diet a minimum of twice daily, early morning and late in the day with sufficient hours remaining to allow necessary forage time.

Feeding Techniques

- f. Feed (hay and/or grain) is provisioned at multiple feeding sites throughout enclosures to ensure that all equines have access and to reduce or eliminate aggression that results from competition for food resources, especially preferred items.
- g. Where possible integrated individuals are fed together to maintain social relationships, however, it may be necessary to separate animals to prevent aggression over feed and to allow accurate measurement of feed consumption.
- h. Supplemental hay is dispersed widely throughout pastures and dry lots to reduce or eliminate aggression that results from competition for feed.

Diet Changes, Increases or Decreases

- i. Adjustments made to an already formulated and nutritionally balanced diet are made to the entire diet to ensure continued nutritional balance.



- j. Diet increases or decreases take into consideration issues such as weight and condition of the individual equine, feed consumption, activity level and other medical or behavioral considerations.
- k. Diet increases or decreases are made in modest increments with animal response to the change assessed for a minimum period before additional changes are made.
- l. Underweight individuals experiencing health or behavioral problems may be separated for supplemental feeding as needed.

N-4. Feed Storage

Feed is stored appropriately.

General

- a. Separate and secure facilities are provided for proper and hygienic storage of feed.
- b. Grains are stored in clean, dry storage areas in sealed containers or on pallets. Products are dated and rotated to use oldest stock first. Expired feed, as well as bags damaged by pests, are discarded.
- c. Grass hay, alfalfa, straw and other baled products are stored in a sheltered area on pallets or via some other means of ensuring the products will stay dry.

N-5. Feed Handling

Feed is handled and prepared in an appropriate manner to retain nutritional value, freshness, and freedom from spoilage, invasive species or other forms of contamination.

General

- a. Feed is protected against dampness, deterioration, mold, and/or contamination by insects, birds, rodents or other animals.
- b. No feed that is spoiled or otherwise contaminated is served.
- c. Diets are prepared in a safe and hygienic manner to reduce the possibility of contamination or spoilage.

Veterinary Care

V-1. General Medical Program and Staffing

There is a written veterinary medical program, overseen by a licensed veterinarian, with adequate support staff at the Rescue/Sanctuary, with 24/7 veterinary care available on call.

- a. The rescue/sanctuary has a written veterinary medical program, including long term preventative medical protocols and disease surveillance and containment procedures. The medical program is developed and carried out under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian who has training or experience in providing medical care for the equines and other species housed at the rescue/sanctuary, and who is aware of specific health concerns regarding the equines at the facility.
- b. One or more full-time veterinarians specifically concerned with the veterinary medical program is highly recommended for rescues/sanctuaries whose budget will support the salaries of such trained personnel. Sanctuaries unable to employ a veterinarian have access to a licensed veterinarian, with training and experience in equine medicine.
- c. Veterinary care is available 7 days per week and 24 hours per day for the rescue/sanctuary on an on-call basis when a veterinarian is not physically on grounds. When the primary veterinarian is unavailable, there are other suitably experienced veterinarians on call.
- d. Support staff, caregivers and volunteers carry out the following roles: (1) Husbandry (equine caregivers), (2) Technical (medical technologists, veterinary nurses, or individuals trained at the sanctuary), and (3) Clerical. The rescue/sanctuary has available properly trained and qualified professional and supporting personnel as necessary to implement these roles.
- e. A caregiver is trained to deal with emergencies until a veterinarian arrives or is reached. He or she is able to direct any restraint of any equine, provide first aid, be responsible for administration of post-surgical care, and be skilled in maintaining appropriate medical records.
- f. Medications are stored appropriately on site, according to label directions. Medications requiring refrigeration are stored separately from food items.



V-2. On-Site Veterinary Facilities

Veterinary facilities are appropriately located, designed and equipped.

- a. Any on-site veterinary facility or area at the rescue/sanctuary meets all local and state/province building regulations.
- b. Surfaces in the on-site veterinary facility/area with which equines can come in contact are non-toxic and can be readily disinfected.
- c. The on-site facility/area is located away from areas of heavy public use to minimize the noise levels for hospitalized equines.
- d. The on-site facility has separate areas for any of the following veterinary functions performed on-site; physical examinations and medical treatments, enclosures for hospitalized equines, sterile surgery, necropsy, medical quarantine, laboratory, radiology and pharmaceuticals storage which includes, when necessary, a locked safe for narcotics that meets the standards set by applicable regulations (e.g., the Drug Enforcement Administration [DEA] in the United States).
 - Feed preparation areas, storage areas and staff locker room/housing with showers are separate from the medical area.
- e. If the sanctuary does not have an on-site veterinary facility, or only a partially outfitted veterinary area, it has a contract or similar arrangement with a nearby veterinary hospital for off-site treatment as needed.
- f. See also Standard V-4 "Clinical Pathology, Surgical, Treatment and Necropsy Facilities."

V-3. Preventative Medicine Program

The rescue/sanctuary has a complete preventative medicine program.

- a. Appropriate preventative medicine protocols are in place to manage all equines, with special attention paid to geriatric, pregnant and young animals.
- b. The preventative medicine program includes quarantine procedures, parasite surveillance and control, immunization, contraception, infectious disease screening, dental prophylaxis, and periodic reviews of diets, and husbandry techniques and invasive species control (e.g. rats).
- c. The attending veterinarian, in consultation with the sanctuary director, determines schedule for routine physical examinations, including dental and implements any necessary treatment.
- d. A veterinarian, veterinary technician, or other trained person performs regular fecal examinations to look for parasites and other pathogens (random enclosure sampling



is adequate for group-housed equines). Results are recorded. Fecal examinations are repeated following treatment to evaluate efficacy.

- e. All equines are immunized as recommended by the attending veterinarian, using currently recommended procedures and products as appropriate for the country, species and individual.
- f. When equines are immunized by sanctuary personnel, the type, serial number, and source of product are recorded in the individual animal's medical record.

V-4. Clinical Pathology, Surgical, Treatment and Necropsy Facilities

Clinical pathology, surgical facilities and services, medical treatment for rescue/sanctuary equines and necropsy are all high quality, humane, professional, legal, and safe.

- a. Disposition of deceased equines and their body parts meet all legal restrictions.

V-5. Quarantine and Isolation of Equines

Appropriate quarantine and isolation policies and accommodations are in place and utilized. Compromised equines are treated under veterinary guidance.

- a. The rescue/sanctuary has a detailed quarantine policy that is developed and monitored by the primary veterinarian in coordination with appropriate personnel. Equines undergo quarantine for a minimum of 14 days or according to the protocol established by the primary veterinarian, or for a longer period if required by law. Local, state/province, or federal regulations may dictate quarantine length and procedures.
- b. The rescue/sanctuary has holding facilities for the quarantine of newly-arrived equines and isolation facilities for the treatment of sick/injured equines. Quarantine facilities are physically isolated from the rest of the resident equines.
- c. If the rescue/sanctuary does not have an adequate quarantine facility, steps should be taken to have equines undergo quarantine under these guidelines prior to their arrival. If this is not possible, equines are housed so as to minimize contact with other equines. Any equine that is severely distressed by quarantine procedures may require an earlier release or modification of the quarantine area.
- d. All equipment and outer clothing used in quarantine are restricted to that area.
- e. Protective clothing, boots and footbaths are used by all caregivers entering the quarantine area or areas containing quarantined animals. Quarantine clothing is not removed from the quarantine area, except in a sealed container for cleaning.



- f. All caregivers working in quarantine facilities observe established protocols to prevent cross-contamination to other equines, such as personal hygiene and disinfecting of footwear, clothing and equipment
- g. The quarantine area allows for daily cleaning and sanitation. All waste is removed and disposed of properly.
- h. In enclosures housing animals carrying infectious or transmissible diseases, to the extent possible, all surfaces of the enclosure are properly sanitized.
- i. Quarantine animal waste is handled separately from all other manure or compost at the facility. Because of the risk of disease transmission, quarantine waste is not spread on pastures or composted.

V-6. Medical Records and Controlled Substances

Complete medical records are maintained, appropriate statistics maintained, equines have individual identification, and controlled substances are prescribed and stored legally.

Medical Records

- a. An electronic database format is recommended for most record keeping, but in either case, the sanctuary has a back-up system for the records.
- b. Records that, if not required by law, are required by GFAS include but are not limited to:

Individual Records

- Individual animal records showing origin, age, species, gender, microchip number, tattoo or brand, and registration papers.
- A complete set of photos (front, both sides and rear) of each equine on intake and periodically as needed.
- Transport records to and from the rescue/sanctuary to include; health certificate, current negative Coggins test (required in US), date of transportation, transfer method, euthanasia or other disposition of the animal.
- Documentation of condition such as a body condition score.
- Individual veterinary record including medical history, vaccinations, Coggins tests, deworming schedule, dental health, fecal counts and treatments.
- Hoof condition and farrier appointments.
- Behavioral and psychological assessment and measures taken to ensure well-being.
- Reproductive status and history, if known.
- Weight and weight history, current diet and record of diet changes.



- Training and rehabilitation records showing completed objectives and those in development.
 - Acquisition documents; as required by law or documented evidence of acquisition when equine obtained from such sources as auctions, law enforcement or other government official

Group Records

- Group records for equines and all rescue/sanctuary animals including information regarding; disease prevalence, morbidity and mortality rates, daily census, intake activity and disposition statistics.
 - Inspection Reports, as applicable, from international, national, state/province and local agencies, as well as accrediting organizations.
 - Other animal documentation, as applicable, such as complaints or police reports pertaining to specific animal.
- c. Medical records are dated, legible and indicate examination findings, treatments (types of medication, dosage, duration), surgical procedures, anesthetic procedures (type of agent, dosage, effect), results of all laboratory tests (parasitologic, hematologic, bacteriologic, etc.) pathology reports, plus immunization records with all relevant dates, equine identification and nutrition/diet information, and, where applicable, necropsy reports.
- d. Copies of medical records accompany any equine who is transferred to another rescue/sanctuary.
- e. Medical records are maintained under the direction of the veterinarian or trained equine caregiver. Duplicate record sets are stored at another site, in a fire proof or theft proof safe on site or an online storage system.
- f. Statistics are tabulated regularly on the rates and nature of illness and mortality in the rescue/sanctuary.

Controlled Substances

- g. Only a licensed veterinarian prescribes controlled substances used at the rescue/sanctuary, and all such substances are secured in accordance with any applicable laws.
- h. The rescue/sanctuary maintains appropriate records and logs for all controlled drugs used. All drug logs are kept up to date and comply with any national or other legal requirements (such as the Drug Enforcement Agency in the U.S.).
- i. Expired drugs are marked as such and stored separately.
- j. When disposing of drugs, they are discarded in accordance with applicable national, state, and local law and regulations (such as the USDA and DEA in the United States).



V-7. Breeding/Contraception

No intentional propagation of equines occurs, and sound practices are in place and implemented to prevent propagation and to properly care for foals born at the sanctuary.

- a. The rescue/sanctuary has equine-appropriate contraceptive programs in place with the method of contraception used based on current best practice and attending veterinarian recommendations. Stallions are gelded unless otherwise suggested by a licensed veterinarian.
- b. If mares arrive at the facility pregnant, the sanctuary provides necessary care and the mare is allowed to deliver unless there are valid health reasons for terminating the pregnancy, or unless the attending veterinarian feels the pregnancy is in such an early stage that aborting the fetus is an option, if so desired by the rescue/sanctuary.

V-8. Zoonotic Disease Program

The personnel and rescue/sanctuary veterinarian are knowledgeable about zoonotic diseases that may affect equines at the facility, and implement appropriate policies and procedures as needed to mitigate risk and deal with any exposures that occur.

- a. Personnel have adequate training to understand the potential risk of disease transmission, including potential sources of disease, modes of disease transmission, and clinical signs associated with disease
- b. All personnel are informed when a zoonotic disease occurs at the sanctuary.
- c. When a reportable disease is identified, all appropriate local, state/province, and national regulatory officials are contacted.
- d. All areas in which caregivers have direct contact with equines have hand-washing facilities available in the immediate vicinity (or an equivalent such as bactericidal hand-wipes).

V-9. Euthanasia

Euthanasia is governed by an ethical written policy that includes identification of appropriate personnel and procedures.

- a. The sanctuary has a written policy addressing the circumstances surrounding euthanasia decisions and procedures, including the following:
- b. Euthanasia is performed in compliance with any national or local law, administered under the strict supervision of a licensed veterinarian. In extreme circumstances of animal suffering when a veterinarian is unable to reach the sanctuary in a timely manner, a method such as the use of a firearm to euthanize an animal may be required and is performed by a trained and qualified staff member when no other humane option is available.
- c. Euthanasia is in the best interest of the individual animal only used as a final option, and is not used as management tool (such as a means to create space for more animals).
- d. Acceptable reasons for euthanasia include:
 - Incurable disease/injury that is likely to cause unmanageable pain or suffering;
 - Disease/injury where treatment is likely to cause unreasonable pain or suffering;
 - Disease/injury where available treatment will not be effective in restoring the equine to an acceptable quality of life;
 - Disease/injury where treatment is beyond the normal community standards of monetary expenditure and would cause an excessive burden on the sanctuary resources, and no other sanctuary can step in, after reasonable efforts to locate such a sanctuary;
 - The process of aging has resulted in an unacceptable quality of life;
 - In the event of presenting an infectious disease risk to some or all of the residents;
- e. Euthanasia is performed so that it avoids distress to the animal.

Well-Being and Handling of Equines

W-1. Physical Well-Being

All equines are routinely monitored to ensure their physical, psychological and behavioral well-being. All aspects of husbandry, including veterinary care, training, enrichment and diet are designed to optimize the equines well-being.

General Well-being

- a. The welfare of each individual equine is the overriding consideration in all rescue/sanctuary actions.
- b. Equines are able to fully express their natural behaviors. This is achieved by adopting husbandry and management procedures, including appropriate housing and enclosure design, positive reinforcement training programs and a balanced diet to meet nutritional requirements.
- c. Veterinary care emphasizes disease prevention.
- d. The rescue/sanctuary has a complete preventative care program to include but not limited to; quarantine procedures, parasite surveillance and control, immunization, contraception, infectious disease screening, dental care and periodic reviews of diets, husbandry techniques and hoof care.
- e. All procedures and treatments performed on equines employ current professionally accepted humane methods of assessment and treatment.
- f. Regular assessments are performed in an effort to quantify and measure the welfare of individual animals through monitoring of nutritional, physical and social conditions. Qualified caregivers conduct daily observations of each equine to monitor for signs of physical abnormalities. Note: In free-ranging enclosures for feral or wild equine, it may not be possible to observe each animal on a daily basis. In such habitats, it is important to get an accurate count and to spend time observing all equines on a weekly basis.
- g. Compromised equines are assessed on a regular basis for fitness, strength and muscle tone prior to the commencement of any training program with a goal to restoring or maintaining maximum physical function.
- h. Where possible and appropriate, records of individual equines are kept to provide both behavioral and veterinary history.
- i. Henneke Body Condition Scoring is used to evaluate overall condition. All equines maintain a score between 4 and 7 unless;
 - Equines have been cared for at the facility for less than six months and are showing continued and documented improvements,
 - Equines with certain chronic health conditions,



- Equines more than 20 years of age may have body condition scores outside this range.
- j. A veterinarian supervises the medical care, including routine parasite treatment and re-feeding programs, of equines scoring 4 or less.
- k. A veterinarian supervises the medical care, treatment and diet changes for equines scoring greater than 7.
- l. Fecal exams are performed as recommended by the primary veterinarian and equine are treated for parasites as needed. Manure is managed to help control insects and parasites.
- m. Manure management and use of fly sprays, masks and other methods are used when possible to control insects in the summer months,
- n. Vaccinations and required tests are given as recommended and/or required. These may include but are not limited to, Eastern and Western Encephalomyelitis, West Nile Virus, Rabies and Tetanus.
- o. Equine receive age-appropriate and condition-appropriate dental evaluations and treatment to facilitate proper and adequate feed digestion. Equines younger than 5 years or older than 15 years require more frequent dental evaluations.
- p. Equines receive regular hoof care, maintenance and trimming every six to eight weeks or as directed by a veterinarian or qualified farrier.

W-2. Social Housing and Herd Management

Equines are grouped appropriately with the safety of animals and caregivers in mind.

General

- a. Equines are pastured in natural bonding groups, appropriately managed for social compatibility as well as dominance and aggression, with space to exercise, play and interact socially with other equines.
- b. Equines are not housed or pastured near animals that interfere with their health or cause them physical or psychological discomfort.
- c. Equines are housed or pastured so that no individual endures constant harassment or suffers physical injury, and social behaviors do not prevent any individual from maintaining proper nutrition and hydration.
- d. Close attention is paid to equines in social housing, with age, species, and sex of animals housed together taken into account.



Social Housing and Herd Management

- e. Rescue/sanctuaries strive to house no less than two equines wherever possible. Equines are allowed to graze together and form natural bonding groups.
- f. Equines pastured together are monitored to ensure that more dominant equines do not prevent others from accessing shelters, water or feed.
- g. Equines are kept outside as much as possible, ideally with 24-hour access to a pasture, (or an outdoor paddock or enclosure supplemented with exercise) unless otherwise recommended by the primary veterinarian. This provides opportunity for each equine to move freely and interact with other equine.

Solitary Housing

- h. In general solitary housing is temporary and reserved for situations including but not limited to quarantine, medical assessment or care, lack of appropriate social partners, or social tension resulting in disruption to the main herd or physical aggression leading to injuries.
- i. Singly-housed equines have visual access to other equines and are closely observed for distress at separation from pasture mates. Steps are taken to mitigate such distress.

W-3. Introduction of Unfamiliar Individuals

Introduction of any new equine to a social group is done according to appropriate introduction techniques with safety of caregivers and equine ensured.

General

- a. The rescue/sanctuary has the ability to manage introductions and separations of an equine from a herd.
- b. Caregivers are aware of each equine's social compatibility and the dominance hierarchies of each herd.
- c. Feed and water consumption is monitored carefully to ensure that all equines have access.
- d. All equines in a herd have access to shelter, ample room to move away from each other and no opportunities to be cornered.
- e. Desired outcomes are identified for each step in the introduction process, such as:
 - physical location of animals during visual contact period;
 - benchmarks for proceeding to physical introduction;
 - space and enclosures to be used for physical introduction;



- criteria for separating animals if physical introduction does not proceed safely;
 - post introduction management and husbandry protocols.
- f. The plan establishes behavioral goals for introductions and is not driven by schedules, and is open to modification as introduction/integration develops and evolves.
- g. All caregivers have a clear understanding of the plan including contingencies for problems that might occur, and are empowered to take appropriate action in the event of perceived emergency.

W-4. Behavioral/Psychological Well-Being

The behavioral/psychological well-being of each equine is evaluated and addressed, and a welfare plan and report is part of each animal's file.

General

- a. All equine caregivers are trained to recognize normal and abnormal equine behavior and clinical signs of illness. Measures of well-being assessed include:
- Natural equine behavior and interaction with other animals;
 - Response to variable environmental conditions, physiological states, developmental stages, and social situations as well as adverse stimuli.
- b. Stereotypic behavior, self-injurious behavior, and inappropriate responses to various stimuli are documented and a welfare plan to address concerns is developed.
- c. A behavioral/psychological profile is maintained for each individual, or herd of equines and updated as needed.

W-5. Equine-Caregiver Relationships

Positive relationships between equines and caregivers are maintained. Animals are not fearful or aggressive in response to human presence or routine care procedures.

General

- a. Prior experiences of equines are taken into account when handled to ensure well-being and safety.
- b. Facility design plays a key role in caregiver-equine safety and the ability to maintain a positive relationship.
- c. All new caregivers are supervised until familiar with each resident animal



- d. A positive relationship between the equines and regular caregivers, animal managers and veterinary staff is essential for the well-being of the equine.
- e. The animals do not become fearful or overly aggressive in response to human presence or routine care procedures.
- f. Negative interactions are avoided. However, when they occur, efforts are made to recover trust and a positive relationship.

W-6. Handling and Restraint

Any necessary handling, catching and restraint are done safely and appropriately, with minimal distress to equines, and staff are trained in safe handling techniques/practices.

General

- k. Direct physical interaction with some equines, e.g. feral and wild equines, may pose a risk to caregivers.
 - In these cases, the sanctuary director, veterinarian or animal care manager determines the appropriate restraint methods to be used to perform essential veterinary or management activities.
 - Only fully trained personnel participate in these activities.
- l. Where possible and appropriate, training is used to minimize the need for chemical sedation and immobilization and to reduce stress during procedures.
- m. Chemical sedation/immobilization is performed only by a licensed veterinarian or by trained staff under the guidance of a licensed veterinarian, or other qualified individuals authorized by the sanctuary director or veterinarian, following the laws and regulations of country where the animals are housed. Specific anesthetic protocols, including record-keeping, are followed.

W-7. Animal Transport

All necessary equine transport is conducted to maximize safety and minimize stress and in accordance with all local, state/province, national, international requirements and laws.



General

- a. Pre-transport health examinations normally include a complete physical exam with attention to parasite checks, necessary vaccinations, and completion of any tests required by regulations of the receiving state/province or country.
- b. Health certificates and any required transport permits (e.g. negative Coggins test in US) accompany the equines when being transported interstate or internationally. All transport abides by local, state/province, federal and international law. A veterinarian is responsible for preparing and signing the health certificate.
- c. Prior to transport, the rescue/sanctuary ensures that adequate facilities are available at the receiving end and feed items that are familiar to the equine are available.
- d. Where possible and appropriate, equines are acclimated to the transporting trailer prior to transport. Transportation methods (including methods of catching) consider the animal's temperament and behavior in order to minimize injury and distress.
- e. At a minimum, transport enclosures meet appropriate animal welfare standards (e.g., IATA, US Animal Welfare Act Transportation Standards or similar).
- f. Transport trailers and vehicles are in good condition, readily available for use and meet federal and/or international standards.
- g. Where equines are transported in vehicles without climate control, animals are not transported in severe weather; transport is timed for the coolest part of the day; there are windows that can be opened to increase ventilation as needed.
- h. Any equine taken outside the rescue/sanctuary, for an approved reason such as medical treatment or transfer to a more appropriate facility, is in the personal possession of the sanctuary director, or of competent persons acting on his/her behalf and adequate provision is made for the safety and well-being of the animal and public safety.
- i. All equine taken outside the rescue/sanctuary are kept securely at all times. Equines are managed outside the facility in such a way that the animal is under control and not likely to suffer distress, cause injury or transmit or contract disease.
- j. Complete medical records, diet and husbandry information, and identifying papers (e.g., describing brands, or other identification methods) accompany all transported equines.

Adoptions and Fostering

P-1. Adoptions

Equine adoptions are accompanied by appropriate legal documents that, specify the transfer of ownership within an agreed time frame, provide a lifetime safety net for the equine, and ensure humane and responsible care.

- a. A documented adoption policy/process is in place that includes at a minimum:
 - Evaluation of each equine's health, temperament, physical abilities and training.
 - A recorded, detailed, legal description of each equine including any identifying marks, tattoos, brands, microchips, etc.
 - An application and thorough screening process that ensures each adopter has the equine skills and resources to manage and care for the intended equine to be adopted.
 - Sufficient organizational liability insurance to cover the risks of adopters handling/riding equines on the rescue/sanctuary property as part of the screening process.
- b. Adopted equines are provided with appropriate living environments (including appropriate food, water, shelter, and safe fencing), veterinary, hoof care, and preventative care, all in accordance with GFAS Equine Care Standards. The adopted equine's social, behavioral and companionship needs are also met.
- c. All equine adoptions are accompanied by a legally binding document that includes at a minimum:
 - A safety net for the adopted equine by specifying the recovery of the equine should the adopting party fail to abide by outlined duties and expectations.
 - Prohibiting the adopter from breeding the equine in question; selling or transferring the equine for slaughter; transferring the equine to a livestock auction; or any other prohibited uses such as racing.
 - The conditions under which an adopted equine can be returned to the original adoption organization or rehomed to a placement equal to or better than the current adoption placement, in accordance with GFAS Equine Care Standards.
 - Specifying that the rescue/sanctuary organization be notified in the event of the death of an adopted horse. Equines are humanely euthanized only on the recommendation of the attending veterinarian.
 - Specifying the methods and time period(s) wherein the primary equine rescue/sanctuary facility may follow up on the adopted equine's health,



welfare and progress and to ensure compliance with the terms of the agreement.

- d. For a definition of 'Equine Adoptions', see 'Definitions', page 3.

P-2. Foster Care Placements

Equine foster care placements are accompanied by legal documents that do not transfer ownership but specify the responsibilities of all parties for providing humane and responsible care.

- a. Equines in foster care placements are provided with appropriate living environments (including appropriate food, water, shelter, and safe fencing), veterinary, hoof care, and preventative care, all in accordance with GFAS Equine Care Standards. The equine's social, behavioral and companionship needs are also met.
- b. All equine foster care placements provide physical facilities and levels of care equal to or above that of the primary equine sanctuary/rescue facility in accordance with GFAS Equine Care Standards.
- c. All equine foster care placements are accompanied by a legally binding document specifying the duties and responsibilities of each party.
- d. All foster care agreements contain wording related to the recovery of the equine should the foster home fail to abide by such duties and expectations, or if the foster home can no longer keep the equine.
- e. Equine foster care agreements specify the methods and time period(s), wherein the primary equine rescue/sanctuary facility may follow up on the fostered equine's health, welfare and progress and to ensure compliance with the terms of the agreement.
- f. Equine foster care agreements specify how potential adopters will be able to visit the equine and under what circumstances and conditions.
- g. Equine foster home caregivers have access to veterinarians able to make emergency calls, and the names and telephone numbers of those veterinarians are kept on file with the primary sanctuary/rescue facility.
- h. Equine foster care agreements instruct caregivers to seek professional advice regarding potential tax benefits, if any, of fostering an equine.
- i. The rescue organization has sufficient liability insurance to cover all equines which ownership of has been retained.



Rescue Policies

R-1. Rescue of Equines

The rescue/sanctuary has developed guidelines for rescue work, taking into account caregiver and animal safety, contingencies for caring for the animal once rescued, and any local, state or national regulations or agency cooperation required.

- a. Rescues and sanctuaries that assist in law enforcement investigations and seizures of equine neglect and abuse have knowledge of laws concerning abuse and neglect in applicable state and understand which city, county and state authorities are authorized to act.
- b. The rescue/sanctuary has developed working relationships with appropriate law-enforcement officials including; police departments, animal shelters, animal control officials and humane societies.
- c. Staff/volunteers are trained to assist in a seizure, investigate neglect complaints and provide detailed reports as required by local law enforcement.
- d. The rescue/sanctuary has facilities, space and resources to hold seized equines until a hearing or trial which could be for an undetermined time period.
- e. The rescue/sanctuary has emergency funds readily available to provide veterinary care and rehabilitation of seized equines.
- f. A euthanasia policy is in place to address situations where the animal's prognosis for survival based on the advice of the attending veterinarian, is too low to warrant attempting treatment.

Physical Well-being

The following links provide an overview of the Henneke Body Condition Scoring system and a copy of the scoring checklist.

<http://www.gerlltd.org/Education/Equine%20Body%20Condition%20Score%20Presentati on.pdf>

http://www.trfinc.org/mc_images/category/4/henneke_scale.pdf

APPENDIX I

Security and Emergency Coverage

Clarification: The purpose of this standard is to protect animals to the extent possible and reasonable from emergencies associated with primarily fire and intruders. Some equine and farm animal rescue/sanctuary organizations may not have personnel actually living on the premises but living nearby. In order to make a determination that animals are protected to the extent possible, the following criteria (which are elements of other standards) will be taken into consideration for each unique situation:

- A fire detection system exists that is directly connected to the senior caregiver and/or emergency personnel.
- Existing fire suppression system in the barn.
- A neighbor in close proximity has expressed willingness to respond to an emergency alarm that can be heard from this residence.
- Fire prevention is advocated on the property by: nonsmoking policy; hay or bedding is not stored in barn where animals reside; electric wire is in conduits; no extensive use of extension cords; dust and cobwebs removed regularly etc.
- Senior caregiver/volunteer lives within a 2 mile radius of the facility or can respond within 15 minutes.
- All access points to the property are securely locked after hours.
- No trespassing signage at all access points.
- A neighbor in close proximity has expressed willingness to report an intruder.