

HERF Standard Operating Procedures for Injury Review

Definitions

Attending Veterinarian

A private veterinarian selected and paid by the trainer and/or owner to provide veterinary care to their horses.

Regulatory Veterinarian

A veterinarian selected and paid by the state racing commission to work in a regulatory capacity. Two Regulatory Veterinarians are present on track during racing and serve as first responders to injured horses. They determine whether a horse should be sedated and transported off the track or, in the case of a fatal injury, euthanized on the track or in the horse ambulance. Regulatory Veterinarians may not be employed by or receive compensation from trainers or owners.

Association Veterinarian

A veterinarian selected and paid by the racetrack, most commonly working in a regulatory capacity and present on track during racing.

HERF Preferred Board-Certified Surgeon (“HPBCS”)

A veterinarian who has completed a selective and rigorous three-year surgical residency under the guidelines of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons (ACVS), typically following a one-year internship. Board certification requires completion of specialty training, authorship of a peer-reviewed research publication, and successful completion of comprehensive examinations.

HERF Preferred Board-Certified Internal Medicine Specialist (“HPBCIMS”)

A veterinarian who has completed a selective and rigorous three-year internal medicine residency under the guidelines of the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine (ACVIM) typically following a one-year internship. Board certification requires completion of specialty training, authorship of a peer-reviewed research publication, and successful completion of comprehensive examinations. These specialists are consulted for cardiac, respiratory, gastrointestinal, and neurologic conditions.

HERF Representative and/or Liaison

An onsite individual designated by HERF to coordinate injury review, owner communication, financial arrangements, and post-injury outcomes on behalf of HERF.

Fatal Injury

An injury involving an open fracture, fractures affecting more than one limb or severe trauma. These injuries are exceedingly difficult if not impossible to successfully repair due to level of contamination and damage to the blood supply.

Non-Ambulatory

A horse that is unable to rise or bear weight and requires immediate assessment. Differential diagnoses may include head trauma, cardiac or metabolic events, heat stroke, skull fracture, spinal fractures (cervical, thoracic, lumbar, or sacral), or proximal limb fractures (scapula, humerus, pelvis, or tibia).

Eligible Injury

An injury that is not Fatal, and where the team of veterinarians treating the horse—or, in the event of a disagreement among the team members, where the HPBCS or HPBCIMS—reasonably concludes that,

with treatment, the horse has a very strong likelihood of achieving pain-free pasture soundness with little or no ongoing long-term veterinary care.

1. Background

All HISA-covered racetracks maintain protocols for the management of injuries sustained by horses during training and racing.

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) establishes a consistent framework for reviewing training and racing injuries to determine the most appropriate option for each horse based on **best possible quality of life**, independent of future racing potential. Options may include rest, rehabilitation, surgery, or humane euthanasia when no other humane alternative exists. The most important question to answer in deciding which option to pursue among various possible alternatives will always be: “What is in the best interests of the horse”?

This SOP ensures a standardized response following initial assessment by the Attending Veterinarian and/or Regulatory Veterinarian, including diagnosis, prognosis, and decision-making.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all HISA-covered racetracks and encompasses the following:

1. Injury assessment following a training or racing incident
 2. Decision-making processes and available veterinary and aftercare resources
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3. Responsibilities

3.1 Musculoskeletal Injuries

HERF will ensure the following:

- a. In collaboration with the Regulatory Veterinarian and Attending Veterinarian, all injured horses receive appropriate diagnostic imaging unless the injury is clearly Fatal (e.g., open fracture, bilateral fractures, severe trauma).
- b. All diagnostic imaging studies are reviewed by both the Attending Veterinarian and an HPBCS.
- c. The likelihood of recovery is assessed, and the veterinary team determines whether the injury is Eligible for HERF intervention – i.e. whether there is a very strong likelihood of achieving pain-free pasture soundness with little or no ongoing long-term veterinary care – incorporating input from the HBPCS and the Attending Veterinarian. In the event of a dispute among the veterinary team on whether or not the injury is Eligible, the decision of HPBCS will control.
- d. No horse is denied consideration or review following a non-Fatal injury.

A HERF Representative will work in coordination with the Attending Veterinarian and HPBCS to:

1. Contact the owner of the horse and ensure that the horse receives the appropriate diagnostics.
2. Present available options and associated prognoses

3. Obtain written confirmation of the owner's decision
4. Inform the Regulatory Veterinarian of the final decision

3.2 Respiratory, Cardiac or Neurological Insult or Injury

HERF will ensure the following:

- a. In collaboration with the Regulatory Veterinarian and Attending Veterinarian, all horses receive appropriate treatment and diagnostic imaging and/or blood work.
- b. The clinical findings and diagnostics are reviewed by both the Attending Veterinarian and a HPBCIMS.
- c. The likelihood of recovery is assessed, and the veterinary team determines whether the injury is Eligible for HERF intervention—i.e., whether there is a very strong likelihood of achieving pain-free pasture soundness with little or no ongoing long-term veterinary care—incorporating input from the HPBCIMS and the Attending Veterinarian. In the event of a disagreement among the veterinary team re whether or not the injury is Eligible, the decision of the HPBCIMS will control.
- d. No horse is denied consideration or review following a non-Fatal injury.

A HERF Representative will work in coordination with the Attending Veterinarian and HPBCIMS to:

1. Contact the owner of the horse and ensure that the horse receives the appropriate diagnostic imaging and/or blood work.
2. Present available options and associated prognoses
3. Obtain written confirmation of the owner's decision
4. Inform the Regulatory Veterinarian of the final decision

4. Procedures

4.1 Assessment of Injuries Sustained During Racing

Following an incident during racing, the Regulatory Veterinarian will follow established injury protocols applicable to the racetrack.

- If a horse sustains an apparent single-limb injury (excluding open fractures) and remains ambulatory, the horse will be loaded onto the horse ambulance for further evaluation.
- If the injury is Fatal -- i.e. if more than one limb is involved, an open fracture is present, or the horse is Non-Ambulatory -- the Regulatory Veterinarian will determine whether immediate euthanasia is appropriate. When feasible, efforts should be made to stabilize the horse and transport it for further evaluation by the Attending Veterinarian.

If the injury is not an obvious euthanasia case, the horse will be transported to an equine hospital (where available) or an appropriate evaluation area where the necessary diagnostics can be conducted.

- At a minimum, all closed single-limb fractures will be radiographed.
- Soft-tissue injuries will be evaluated via ultrasonography.

- When safe and indicated, cardiac, respiratory, and/or neurologic evaluation will be performed.
- If the owner declines diagnostic imaging and workup, HERF will cover the cost.

Unless the owner insists on immediate euthanasia, diagnostic findings will be reviewed by the Attending Veterinarian and Regulatory Veterinarian with consultation from a HPBCS or HBPCIMS, as appropriate.

Surgical Cases: If there is disagreement among the veterinary team regarding surgical candidacy – i.e., whether or not there is a strong likelihood of achieving pain-free pasture soundness with little or no ongoing long-term veterinary care – then the opinion of the HPBCS will control. The HPBCS must be the surgeon likely to perform the procedure.

- If the HPBCS determines the prognosis does not meet the standard for an Eligible Injury, then HERF will have no further involvement, and the owner and trainer may elect humane euthanasia or possible further treatment.
- If the HPBCS determines that the injury is Eligible, then the HERF Representative will ensure that the owner is contacted and that the procedures in Section 4.3 below are followed.

Non Surgical Cases: If there is disagreement among the veterinary team regarding candidacy for treatment – i.e., whether or not there is a strong likelihood of achieving pain-free pasture soundness with little or no ongoing long-term veterinary care – then the opinion of the HPBCIMS will control. The HPBCIMS must be the specialist likely to provide the initial care.

- If the HPBCIMS determines the prognosis does not meet this standard for an Eligible Injury, then HERF will have no further involvement, and the owner and trainer may elect humane euthanasia or possible further treatment.
- If the HBPCIMS determines that the injury is Eligible, then the HERF Representative will ensure that the owner is contacted and that the procedures in Section 4.3 below are followed.

4.2 Injuries Sustained During Training

Due to logistical constraints—e.g., no Regulatory Veterinarian being present during training at many racetracks—and resource limitations, HERF’s role in addressing injuries sustained during training will be much more passive relative to the very proactive role that HERF will take regarding injuries sustained during racing.

HERF will stand ready to provide assistance with injuries sustained during training, but the burden will be on the Attending Veterinarian to reach out to HERF and seek HERF’s involvement in the event that a horse being treated by an Attending Veterinarian sustains an injury during training that the Attending Veterinarian believes is Eligible for HERF intervention. In such event, then after being brought in by the Attending Veterinarian HERF will follow the procedures and protocols set forth in this SOP.

4.3a Surgical Decision

If the veterinary team, led by the HPBCS, determines that the injury is Eligible and that treatment is appropriate, then the HPBCS will provide an estimate of surgical and recovery costs to the HERF Representative.

The HERF Representative will contact the owner and the appropriate horsemen’s organization to convey:

- a. Prognosis
- b. Estimated costs of surgery and recovery
- c. Available financial arrangements, if applicable

If the owner elects to proceed with surgery:

1. Owners who agree to assume full financial responsibility will make arrangements directly, and HERF involvement will conclude.
2. If the owner is unable or unwilling to pay for surgery, HERF may elect to fund the procedure. In such cases, legal possession of the horse must be transferred to HERF in writing **prior** to removal from the racetrack.

4.3b Non-surgical Decision or Medical Issue

In the circumstance of a non-surgical injury and/or a medical issue, if the veterinary team, led by the HPBCIMS, determines that the injury is Eligible, and that treatment is appropriate, then the HPBCIMS will provide an estimate of initial work-up and hospital costs to the HERF Representative. The HERF Representative will estimate costs through rehabilitation.

The HERF Representative will contact the owner and the appropriate horsemen's organization to convey:

- a. Prognosis
- b. Estimated costs of recovery
- c. Available financial arrangements, if applicable

If the owner elects to proceed with treatment and rehabilitation:

1. Owners who agree to assume full financial responsibility will make arrangements directly, and HERF involvement will conclude.
2. If the owner is unable or unwilling to pay for treatment and rehabilitation, HERF may elect to fund the costs. In such cases, legal possession of the horse must transfer to HERF in writing **prior** to removal from the racetrack. Thursday, February 19, 2026

4.4 Protocols for HERF Taking Ownership of Horse for Treatment

When the owner refuses to pay for treatment of an Eligible Injury, HERF will follow the below protocols to take ownership of and treat the horse:

- a. The HERF Representative will secure the signature of the owner on the paperwork necessary to transfer ownership of the horse to HERF. Ownership includes: (i) receiving a notarized bill of sale for \$1; (ii) retirement of the horse from the Jockey Club database; and (iii) retirement of the horse to HERF in the HISA portal.
- b. The HERF Representative will arrange for the horse to be housed and cared for at the racetrack until transport to the hospital or the treatment facility can be arranged.
- c. The HERF Representative will secure the transportation necessary for the horse to be treated.
- d. Unless contra-indicated, all stallions will be gelded as part of their treatment.

4.5 Treatment and Recovery

HERF will stay in communication with the HPBCS or HPBCIMS, as appropriate, throughout the treatment (including surgery) and recovery process. If, at any point during this process, either (i) the likelihood of achieving pain-free pasture soundness with little or no ongoing long-term veterinary care declines to an inhumane threshold; or (ii) the HPBCS or HPBCIMS determines that the horse's condition has declined to an inhumane threshold, then humane euthanasia will be performed.

5.0 Rehabilitation and post-operative care

Following treatment and immediate recovery, HERF will ensure that the horse is transported to a HERF-approved facility with the capacity and expertise to provide the horse with the post-operative care and treatment that is necessary and appropriate for the horse's full recovery. Such care and treatment can last from 3 to 12 months, and can include private paddocks for the recovery, hands-on oversight, farm night checks, bandage changes, and hand walking as needed.

Equine hospital rehabilitation costs roughly \$150 per day, while rehabilitation at off-site facilities typically runs \$25-35 per day. While the same facility may serve as both the horse's rehabilitation facility and long-term aftercare home, this will not always be the case.

6.0 Aftercare

Following the completion of rehabilitation, HERF will place the horse in an appropriate aftercare facility. If the horse is physically capable of being retrained for an alternative career – for example as an equestrian or therapy horse – then HERF will select a facility that provides such retraining. If the horse is pasture-sound only, HERF will select a pure sanctuary. Breeders and previous owners of specific horses may be willing to retire those horses to their farms, and HERF will make this outreach wherever feasible at the appropriate time.

HERF will maintain a close working relationship with the TAA, but is also aware of the importance of not overburdening already-stretched TAA-accredited organizations. Regardless of whether a horse goes to a facility for retraining or a pure sanctuary, HERF will fund the costs of the horse's care until either (i) the horse enters a second career (thus leaving the aftercare facility); or (ii) passes away.