



MEDIA RELEASE

REVISED TONGUE TIES POLICY

Following a recommendation from the Veterinary and Analytical Committee (VAC) and recent endorsement by the Chairmen of Stewards Committee (COSC), Racing Australia is amending the Tongue Ties Policy. The Policy is part of the National Equipment Register.

The revised Policy will take effect on **1 April 2020**.

The rationale for the key changes to the Policy recommended by VAC are set out below.

Change to Policy	Rationale for change
Nylon stockings and self-adhesive bandages are no longer permitted to be used. Lycra or neoprene (at least 50mm wide) are now permitted to be used. Note: Leather strap or rubber band (at least 15mm wide) are still permitted to be used as per the current Policy.	To reduce the risk of causing a horse a tongue injury.
Tongue ties must not be applied more than 30 minutes before a race and must be removed as soon as practicable.	When used correctly and for short periods of time, a tongue tie has negligible negative welfare implications for a horse and is likely to reduce stress in a horse by allowing it to breathe more comfortably during exercise.
Tongue ties must not be attached to the bit or bridle.	To reduce the risk of damage to a horse's tongue should the bridle be dislodged from the head in a fall.

Contrary to some media reports, the change to the Tongue Ties Policy follows an extensive process of review and consultation as outlined below:

- VAC commenced discussions on the use of tongue ties following consideration of several peer reviewed studies and trials.
- Since then, the Australian Trainers Association (ATA) and various trainers have been directly consulted on the use of tongue ties. This has included State-based members of VAC consulting with a wide range of metropolitan and country trainers and providing them with over 200 sample tongue ties made from neoprene to trial, with no negative feedback received.
- Implementation of a proposed change to the Policy was deferred in 2019 following consultation with the ATA and trainers.
- Following careful consideration of the relevant issues – including stakeholder feedback – VAC recommended a change to the Policy, which was endorsed by COSC in December 2019. (This is consistent with historical practice and AR 206, which provides that all gear used on a horse in a race, official trial, jump-out or trackwork must be approved by COSC and listed in the National Equipment Register.)

“The application of a tongue tie to a racehorse is an appropriate method of preventing forward and upwards displacement of the tongue that can, during exercise, potentially cause upper airway



restrictions. *This has been demonstrated and reported within peer reviewed scientific literature*” said Dr Judith Medd, VAC’s Vice-Chair.

“Tongue ties make racing safer by ensuring that those horses known by their trainers to get their tongue over the bit, do not flip their tongues above the bit, thereby ensuring that the rider can maintain control of the horse during the race”.

“Prohibiting the use of nylon stockings is a positive step forward, given they can pose a higher risk of causing tongue injury. Regulating the time a tongue tie can remain in place and more clearly specifying how they are to be applied will also improve horse welfare outcomes”.

“The changes to the Tongue Ties Policy provide an appropriate balance between the welfare of the horse and performance” said Mr Myles Foreman, Racing Australia’s Acting CEO.

“Racing Australia is constantly and proactively reviewing the rules of racing and related policies. We are committed to ensuring positive outcomes are achieved for horses involved in the Australian Thoroughbred racing industry, and continue to engage with industry, government and animal welfare bodies to further develop effective equine welfare initiatives”.

A copy of the revised Tongue Ties Policy follows.

Tongue Ties & Tongue Clips

Approval for use: *Tongue Ties and Tongue Clips are approved for use for the purposes of AR 206(1), subject to the conditions set out below.*

Specifications: *Tongue Ties must be either: (a) leather strap or rubber band (at least 15mm wide); or (b) lycra or neoprene (at least 50mm wide).*

Application: *Tongue Ties and Tongue Clips must not be applied more than 30 minutes prior to race time.*

Proper application: *All Tongue Ties are to be looped around the tongue and secured around the lower jaw. Tongue Ties must be clearly visible at all times. Tongue Ties must never be attached to the bit or bridle.*

Tongue position: *Tongues which are tied must remain inside the horse’s mouth in its usual position.*

Tongue Clips: *Tongue Clips must be rubber and attached to the bit. Tongue Clips with strap are also permitted.*

Removal: *Tongue Ties and Tongue Clips must be removed as soon as practicable.*

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For further information:

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