

Pony Club Association of New South Wales Inc.

PONY CLUB NSW CONCUSSION/CONTINUING AFTER A FALL POLICY

The following rules apply to all Pony Club events including Club, Zone and State events. They apply to all disciplines.

Every 4 or so years, a panel of medical experts meets to update and form a consensus on the best management of concussion. In late 2012 this was the 4th such gathering termed the Zurich 2012 Consensus Statement of Concussion in Sport.

The results of this update have been a review of the rules regarding falls and potential concussion or head injury. After this review our recommendations to Organizers, Coaches and Parents are as follows:

1. If a rider has any blow to the head, face, neck or other part of the body that causes an impulsive force to the head, they should be screened for acute symptoms of concussion.
2. Symptoms to screen for include: loss of consciousness, seizure, amnesia, headache, pressure in head, neck pain, nausea or vomiting, dizziness, blurred vision, balance problems, sensitivity to light or noise, feeling slowed down or in a fog, "Don't feel right", difficulty concentrating or remembering, fatigue, confusion, drowsiness, emotional or irritable, sadness or anxiousness.
3. Any member with a suspected concussion should be immediately removed from riding, should not be left alone or allowed to drive, and should be referred for medical assessment.
4. Same day return to riding should only be allowed with medical clearance that there was not a concussion.

Signs and Symptoms

The signs and symptoms of a concussion can be subtle and may not be immediately apparent. Symptoms can last for days, weeks or even longer. The most common symptoms after a concussive traumatic brain injury are headache, amnesia and confusion. The amnesia, which may or may not be preceded by a loss of consciousness, may involve the loss of memory of the impact that caused the concussion.

Signs and symptoms of a concussion may include:

- Headache or a feeling of pressure in the head
- Temporary loss of consciousness
- Confusion or feeling as if in a fog
- Amnesia surrounding the traumatic event
- Dizziness or "seeing stars"
- Ringing in the ears
- Nausea or vomiting
- Slurred speech
- Fatigue

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Some symptoms of concussions may be immediate or delayed in onset by hours or days after injury:

Most often, it's elite athletes that are considered most prone to concussion, a brain injury that is either caused when the head suffers a severe blow or when the body is shaken and the brain is jostled as a result. However, we are all at risk for concussions whether we play sports regularly or not. Concussion is also the common injury due to car accidents, falls, fights, or passing out and hitting the head.

Experts recommend that no one should return to play or vigorous activity while signs or symptoms of a concussion are present.

5. When a concussion is diagnosed PCA NSW recommends that parents and coaches follow the Graduated Return to Riding Protocol (table 1) allowing at least 24 hours for each stage. This is adapted from the Consensus Return to Play Protocol and time frames may be extended for children under 10 where recovery can be more complicated.

TABLE 1. Graduated Return to Riding Protocol

Rehabilitation Stage	Functional Exercise at Each Stage of Rehabilitation	Objective of Each Stage
1. No activity	Complete physical and cognitive rest	Recovery
2. Light aerobic exercise	Walking, swimming or stationary cycling keeping intensity <70% MPHR; no resistance training	Increase HR
3. Sport-specific exercise	Light flat riding, walk/trot in controlled setting	Add movement
4. Non-contact training drills	Progression to more complex riding on flat	Exercise, coordination, and cognitive load
5. Full contact practice	Following medical clearance, participate in normal training activities (lessons and jumping)	Restore confidence and assess functional skills by coaching staff
6. Return to play	Normal competitive riding	

THIS CHILD'S BRAIN IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THIS COMPETITION, TEST, OR LESSON.

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Recommendation from the executive:

That the following by-laws be introduced,

1. Any rider who has been concussed is not allowed to ride for a minimum of 6 days at a Pony Club event unless certified fit by a doctor in writing.
2. If the rider has a short period of unconsciousness, or a period of post traumatic amnesia, or has been sent to a hospital (regardless of if admitted or not) that rider is not allowed to ride at Pony club for a minimum of six full days.
3. Continuing after a fall - A rider must not be allowed to remount after a fall, if there is any element of doubt as to their fitness, irrespective of the wishes of the player, parents or team manager. Further participation may only be possible following medical examination by either a doctor or a qualified first aid official. Authority to proceed must be given in writing and attached to the incident form.