



Oregon Racing Commission Race Meet Policies	
Title:	Air Quality Index Consultation Policy
Policy Number:	2023-462-1
Applicability:	All Licensed Oregon Race Meets
Reference:	Horse Racing Integrity Act
Effective Date:	February 1, 2024
Approved:	Connie Winn - Executive Director

Background

Particulates in the atmosphere can build up in horse and human respiratory systems causing serious health problems, including eye and respiratory tract irritation. Poor air quality can irritate pre-existing conditions, including recurrent airway obstruction, as well as exercise-induced pulmonary hemorrhage (EIPH). High concentrations of smoke and particulates can cause persistent cough, nasal discharge, wheezing, an increased effort to breathe and altering of the immune system.

Common Signs of Distress Equine:

- Respiratory rate remaining over 30 breaths per minute at rest (normal rate is 12-20 per minute).
- Shortness of breath with possible wheezing sounds.
- Nostrils obviously flaring and anxious expression.
- Very labored breathing with exaggerated movement of chest wall and flanks.
- Cough.
- Nasal discharge.
- Eye irritation.

Common Signs of Distress Human:

- Runny nose.
- Irritated sinuses.
- Headaches.
- Tiredness.
- Chest pain.
- Fast heartbeat.
- Eye irritation.

Purpose



The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance and processes and procedures for horse racing activities during decreased air quality.

Definitions

Air Quality Index (AQI):

The Air Quality Index, or AQI, is the system used to warn the public when air pollution is dangerous. The AQI tracks ozone (smog) and particle pollution (tiny particles from smoke, power plants and factories, vehicle exhaust, and other sources), as well as four other widespread air pollutants.

Policy

AQI Varies based on the site selected to monitor. The Presiding Steward will establish the closest AQI station to the race track and that will be the official reading that will be used for assessing the current risk.

While the AQI is under 150:

Horsepersons should monitor their horses for signs of respiratory inflammation and contact their attending veterinarian to evaluate horses exhibiting coughing, respiratory distress, nasal discharge, or fever.

It is otherwise safe to exercise or race horses at these AQI levels.

Once the AQI reaches 150:

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The Presiding Steward, and/or the Senior Veterinarian of the racing commission shall contact representatives from track management, jockeys, horsepersons, and outriders who will collectively determine if the races will be cancelled or delayed. If the parties cannot come to a consensus the Presiding State Steward shall have final authority in determining a course of action. Should the Presiding Steward not be present, that authority shall revert to the Executive Director of the ORC.

As a minimum, the following will be considered:

- Projected wind
- Projected AQI
- AQI in surrounding areas
- Number of consecutive days with AQI ratings over 150
- Symptoms of irritation by athletes, staff, and patrons

After careful consultation, if racing continues, the athletes will be given additional screening. If symptoms of irritation are observed, consultation will resume. If the AQI reaches 175, races will be suspended for at least 30 minutes to determine if air quality will improve. If improvements are not evident, the race card will be cancelled. If improvements bring AQI under 175, the races will resume provided there are no other indicators that athletes are at risk.



The Presiding Steward of ORC will make the final decision on if races are cancelled if there is no consensus. If for some reason the Presiding Steward is not in attendance, the Executive Director of ORC will make the final decision.

References

[AQI Basics](#)

[Guidelines for Horses Exposed to Wildfire Smoke](#) – UC Davis Veterinary Medicine

Reference Guide: [What Horse Owners Can Do To Monitor Horses Evacuated from Fire Areas](#) –UC Davis Veterinary Medicine

[How wildfire smoke affects pets and other animals](#) – University of Calgary

[The Effect of Wildfires on Equine Lungs: What We Know](#) – Paulick Report

[Canadian Researchers Embark on Study of Air Pollution And EIPH](#) – Paulick Report

[New York State Air Quality Protocol](#)

EPA [Particle Pollution and your Patients Health](#)