



Title: Guide to Horse Capacity – Size of Athlete
Applies to: All Equestrian Australia Dressage & Eventing Activities
Authorised by: Equestrian Australia Dressage Committee – EADC
Equestrian Australia Eventing Committee – EAEC

(Fully supported and endorsed by the EA Coaching Committee)

Purpose of the Guide:

To reinforce Equestrian Australia's commitment to best practice striving for optimal health, safety and welfare of the athlete-horse combination. The weight combination of both horse and athlete can impact on the overall healthy and safe movement, biomechanics, positioning and balance of this combination on varying surfaces. These factors are all key elements in maintaining optimal welfare management for this combination.

To provide education and clarity and highlight awareness of Equestrian Australia's expectations to Athletes, Coaches, Owners, Parents, Judges, Officials and the Public on the aspect of a horse's welfare and capacity to carry weight.

Related Legislation/Guidance Material:

International Animal Welfare guides including Journal of Equine Veterinary Science, Riding for the Disabled Guidelines, and general horse riding Guidelines in the UK and Singapore, Pony Club NSW and Equestrian Australia advocacy for horse welfare. Various information reference links at end.

What this Guide Provides

This Guide will provide Athletes, Owners and Parents with a reasonably accurate measurement of the maximum burden for a horse to carry.

This Guide will support Coaches in conversations with their Athletes about carrying capacity considerations, as they currently do, about choice of mount and all animal welfare aspects of horsemanship.

Nothing will change in the assessment of a horse and their athletic performance by any Judge.

This Guide tailors the capacity of the horse across the entire height range to a standard accepted internationally, and ensures appropriate mounts for humans of every age and size.

This is a Guide not a Rule, it does not prevent any person from participating in any equestrian activity.

The Guide:

The maximum load that a horse is expected to carry should not exceed 20% of the horse's approximate weight. That is, the athlete and equipment should not weigh more than 20% of the horse's approximate weight.

How to measure approximate horse weight:



A horse weight tape placed as shown around the horse's girth and held firmly in place is used to provide an approximate weight. Having established the horse's weight, the carrying capacity can be calculated.

For a Video on how to measure horse weight:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nZnyCfaHs4> or

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMsKc1-3ms0>

Where to get a horse weight tape:

Ask your EA coach or purchase a horse weight tape at saddleries and some produce stores.

If you only have a tape measure, you can still work out how much your horse weighs. Here is a helpful calculator: <https://good-horse.com/tools/horse-weight-calculator/>

Next Measure:

The combined weight of the athlete together with their tack used for the purpose of riding their horse, should be measured on a set of scales.

This is currently a common practice in Endurance competitions. This will NOT take place at any competition beyond Endurance at this time.



The combined Athlete and tack weight should not be more than the maximum 20% of the horse's weight.

Here is a link to a simple 20% online calculator to assist with combined athlete & tack weight
<https://good-horse.com/tools/calculator-much-weight-can-horse-carry/>

This is a guide only. The maximum carrying capacity can vary for different conditions, and may be less in the case of young horses, horses recovering from an injury or surgery, pregnant mares, rehabilitating horses, horses returning from a long break or adult riders schooling young ponies or horses.

End

Link References:

University of Minnesota Study: <https://extension.umn.edu/horse-care-and-management/guidelines-weight-carrying-capacity-horses>

RDA Guidelines UK & Singapore: <https://www.myrda.org.uk/maximum-carrying-weight/#>

RDA Maximum Carrying Weight Guide:

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjWsaOmqdXyAhVUwzgGHSDMDg04ChAWegQIlxAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.myrda.org.uk%2Fassets%2FWeight-Chart-Guidelines-2018.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2Bx5S8rmk_gTR6a6KUGRUc

Journal of Equine Veterinary Science: Evaluation of Indicators of Weight-Carrying Ability of Light Riding Horses:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/248869155_Evaluation_of_Indicators_of_Weight-Carrying_Ability_of_Light_Riding_Horses

Pony Club NSW Handbook Amendments: <https://pcansw.org.au/policies/pca-handbook>

<https://horseracingsense.com/how-much-weight-can-a-horse-carry/>

<https://good-horse.com/tools/calculator-horses-can-carry-comfortably/>

<https://www.horseillustrated.com/horse-experts-horse-vet-advice-safe-weight-horse-carry>

<https://www.besthorserider.com/how-much-weight-should-a-horse-carry/>