

## Virginia Equine Activity Statute

### CODE OF VIRGINIA

#### TITLE 3.1. AGRICULTURE, HORTICULTURE AND FOOD

#### CHAPTER 27.5. EQUINE ACTIVITY LIABILITY ACT

##### 3.1-796.130. Definitions

As used in this chapter, unless the context requires a different meaning:

"Engages in an equine activity" means (i) any person, whether mounted or unmounted, who rides, handles, trains, drives, assists in providing medical or therapeutic treatment of, or is a passenger upon an equine; (ii) any person who participates in an equine activity but does not necessarily ride, handle, train, drive, or ride as a passenger upon an equine; (iii) any person visiting, touring or utilizing an equine facility as part of an event or activity; or (iv) any person who assists a participant or equine activity sponsor or management in an equine activity. The term "engages in an equine activity" does not include being a spectator at an equine activity, except in cases where the spectator places himself in an unauthorized area and in immediate proximity to an equine or equine activity.

"Equine" means a horse, pony, mule, donkey, or hinny.

"Equine activity" means (i) equine shows, fairs, competitions, performances, or parades that involve any or all breeds of equines and any of the equine disciplines, including, but not limited to, dressage, hunter and jumper horse shows, grand prix jumping, three-day events, combined training, rodeos, driving, pulling, cutting, polo, steeple chasing, endurance trail riding and western games, and hunting; (ii) equine training or teaching activities; (iii) boarding equines; (iv) riding, inspecting, or evaluating an equine belonging to another whether or not the owner has received some monetary consideration or other thing of value for the use of the equine or is permitting a prospective purchaser of the equine to ride, inspect, or evaluate the equine; (v) rides, trips, hunts, or other equine activities of any type however informal or impromptu that are sponsored by an equine activity sponsor; (vi) conducting general hoofcare, including but not limited to placing or replacing horseshoes or hoof trimming of an equine; and (vii) providing or assisting in breeding or therapeutic veterinary treatment.

"Equine activity sponsor" means any person or his agent who, for profit or not for profit sponsors, organizes, or provides the facilities for an equine activity, including but not limited to pony clubs, 4-H clubs, hunt clubs, riding clubs, school- and college-sponsored classes and programs, therapeutic riding programs, and operators, instructors, and promoters of equine facilities, including but not limited to stables, clubhouses, ponyride strings, fairs, and arenas at which the activity is held.

"Equine professional" means a person or his agent engaged for compensation in (i) instructing a participant or renting to a participant an equine for the purpose of riding, driving, or being a passenger upon an equine or (ii) renting equipment or tack to a participant.

"Intrinsic dangers of equine activities" means those dangers or conditions that are an integral part of equine activities, including but not limited to, (i) the propensity of equines to behave in ways that may result in injury, harm, or death to persons on or around them; (ii) the unpredictability of an equine's reaction to such things as sounds, sudden movement, and unfamiliar objects, persons, or other animals; (iii) certain hazards such as surface and subsurface conditions; (iv) collisions with other animals or objects; and (v) the potential of a participant acting in a negligent manner that may contribute to injury to the participant or others, such as failing to maintain control over the equine or not acting within the participant's ability.

"Participant" means any person, whether amateur or professional, who engages in an equine activity, whether or not a fee is paid to participate in the equine activity.

### **3.1-796.131. Horse racing excluded**

The provisions of this chapter shall not apply to horse racing, as that term is defined by s 59.1-365.

### **3.1-796.132. Liability limited; liability actions prohibited**

A. Except as provided in § 3.1-796.133, an equine activity sponsor, an equine professional, or any other person, which shall include a corporation, partnership, or limited liability company, shall not be liable for an injury to or death of a

participant resulting from the intrinsic dangers of equine activities and, except as provided in § 3.1-796.133, no participant nor any participant's parent, guardian, or representative shall have or make any claim against or recover from any equine activity sponsor, equine professional, or any other person for injury, loss, damage, or death of the participant resulting from any of the intrinsic dangers of equine activities.

B. Except as provided in § 3.1-796.133, no participant or parent or guardian of a participant who has knowingly executed a waiver of his rights to sue or agrees to assume all risks specifically enumerated under this subsection may maintain an action against or recover from an equine activity sponsor or an equine professional for an injury to or the death of a participant engaged in an equine activity. The waiver shall give notice to the participant of the intrinsic dangers of equine activities. The waiver shall remain valid unless expressly revoked in writing by the participant or parent or guardian of a minor.

### **3.1-796.133. Liability of equine activity sponsors, equine professionals**

No provision of this chapter shall prevent or limit the liability of an equine activity sponsor or equine professional or any other person who:

1. Intentionally injures the participant;
2. Commits an act or omission that constitutes negligence for the safety of the participant and such act or omission caused the injury, unless such participant, parent or guardian has expressly assumed the risk causing the injury in accordance with subsection B of § 3.1-796.132; or
3. Knowingly provides faulty equipment or tack and such equipment or tack was faulty to the extent that it did cause the injury or death of the participant.