

GENERAL LAWS OF RHODE ISLAND

TITLE 4. ANIMALS AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY CHAPTER 21. EXEMPTION FROM LIABILITY ARISING FROM EQUINE ACTIVITIES

R.I. Gen. Laws @ 4-21-1 (1993)

§ 4-21-1. Definitions

For the purpose of this Chapter, the following words or phrases shall have the following meanings:

(a) "Engages in an equine activity" means riding, training, assisting in veterinary treatment of, driving, or being a passenger upon an equine, whether mounted or unmounted, visiting or touring or utilizing an equine facility as part of an organized event or activity, or any person assisting a participant or show management. The term "engages in an equine activity" does not include being a spectator at an equine activity, except in cases where the spectator knowingly places himself in a restricted area.

(b) "Equine" means a horse, pony, mule, or donkey.

(c) "Equine activity" means:

(1) Equine shows, fairs, competitions, or performances 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, riding, driving, pulling, cutting, polo, steeplechasing, English and western performance riding, endurance trail riding, gymkhana games, and hunting;

(2) Equine training or teaching activities or both;

(3) Boarding equines; including normal daily care thereof;

(4) Riding, inspecting, or evaluating by a purchaser or an agent 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;

(5) Rides, trips, hunts or other equine activities of any type, however informal or impromptu, that are sponsored by an equine activity sponsor;

(6) Placing or replacing horseshoes or hoof trimming on an equine; and

(7) Providing or assisting in veterinary treatment.

(d) "Equine activity sponsor" means an individual, group, club, partnership, or corporation, whether or not the sponsor is operating for profit or not for profit, which 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, programs and activities, therapeutic riding programs, stable and farm owners and operators, instructors, and promoters or equine facilities, including but not limited to farms, stables, clubhouses, pony ride strings, fairs, and arenas at which the activity is held.

(e) "Equine professional" means a person engaged for compensation to:

- (1) Instruct a participant or rent to a participant an equine for the purpose of riding, driving or being a passenger upon the equine;
- (2) Rent equipment or tack to a participant;
- (3) Provide daily care of horses boarded at an equine facility; or
- (4) Train an equine.

(f) "Inherent risks of equine activities" means those dangers or conditions which are an integral part of equine activities, including but not limited to:

- (1) The propensity of equines to behave in ways that may result in injury, harm, or death to persons on or around them;
- (2) The unpredictability of an equine's reaction to such things as sounds, sudden movement, and unfamiliar objects, persons, or other animals;
- (3) Collisions with other equines or objects; or
- (4) The potential of a participant to act 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 his or her ability.

(g) "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.

§ 4-21-2. General provisions

Except as provided in § 4-21-3, an equine activity sponsor, an equine professional, or any other person, which shall include a corporation or partnership, shall not be liable for an injury to or the death of a participant resulting from the inherent risks of equine activities unless such equine activity sponsor, professional or other person shall be demonstrated to have failed to exercise due care under the circumstances towards such participant and, except as provided in § 4-21-3, no participant nor any participant's representative shall make any claim against, maintain an action against, or recover from an equine activity sponsor, an equine professional, or any other person for injury, loss, damage, or death of the participant resulting from any of the inherent risks of equine activities unless such equine activity sponsor, professional or other person shall be demonstrated to have failed to exercise due care under the circumstances towards such participant.

§ 4-21-3. Exceptions

(a) This Chapter shall not apply to horse racing meetings to which Chapter 3 of Title 41

is applicable.

(b) Nothing in § 4-21-2 shall prevent or limit the liability of an equine activity sponsor, an equine professional, or any other person if the equine activity sponsor, equine professional, or person:

(1) (A) Provided the equipment or tack, and knew or should have known that the equipment or tack was faulty, and such equipment or tack was faulty to the extent that it did cause the injury; or (B) Provided the equine and failed to make reasonable and prudent efforts to determine the ability of the participant to engage safely in the equine activity, and determine the ability of the participant to safely manage the particular equine based on the participant's representations of his or her ability;

(2) Owns, leases, rents, has authorized use of, or is otherwise in lawful possession and control of the land, or facilities upon which the participant sustained injuries because of a dangerous condition which was known or should have been known to the equine activity sponsor, equine professional, or person;

(3) Commits an act of omission that constitutes willful or wanton disregard for the safety of the participant, and that act of omission caused the injury; or

(4) Intentionally injures the participant.

§ 4-21-4. Posting and notification

(a) Every equine professional shall post and maintain signs which contain the warning notice specified in subsection (b). Such signs shall be placed in a clearly visible location in the proximity of the equine activity. The warning notice specified in subsection (b) shall appear on the sign in black letters, with each letter to be a minimum of one inch in height. Every written contract entered into by an equine professional for the providing of professional services, instruction, or the rental of equipment or tack or an equine to a participant, whether or not the contract involves equine activities on or off the location or site of the equine professional's business, shall contain in clearly readable print the warning notice specified in subsection (b).

(b) The signs and contracts described in subsection (a) shall contain the following warning notice:

WARNING
Under Rhode Island Law, an equine professional, unless he or she can be shown to have failed to be in the exercise of due care, is not liable for an injury to, or the death of, a participant in equine activities resulting from the inherent risks of equine activities, pursuant to this chapter.

HISTORY: P.L. 1993, ch. 357, @ 1.