

**Virginia Equine Activity Statute**  
**§ 3.1-796.130**

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

“*Directly engages in an equine activity*” means a person who rides, trains, drives, or is a passenger upon an equine, whether mounted or unmounted, but does not mean a spectator at an equine activity or a person who participates in the equine activity but does not ride, train, drive, or ride as a passenger upon an equine.

“*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; and
- (v) rides, trips, hunts, or other equine activities of any type however informal or impromptu that are sponsored by an equine activity sponsor. “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. “Participant” means any person, whether amateur or professional, who directly 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 § 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 or an equine professional shall not be liable for an injury to or death of a participant engaged in an equine activity.

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 risks inherent in equine activities, including:

- (i) the propensity of an equine to behave in dangerous ways which may result in injury to the participant;
- (ii) the inability to predict an equine’s reaction to sound, movements, objects, persons, or animals; and
- (iii) hazards of surface or subsurface conditions. The waiver shall remain valid unless expressly revoked by the participant or parent or guardian of a minor. In the case of school and college sponsored classes and programs, waivers executed by a participant or parent or guardian of a participant shall apply to all equine activities in which the participant is involved in the next succeeding twelve month period unless earlier expressly revoked in writing.

**§ 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 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 causes the injury or death of the participant.