

Massachusetts Equine Activity Statute

ANNOTATED LAWS OF MASSACHUSETTS
PART I. ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT
TITLE XIX. AGRICULTURE AND CONSERVATION
CHAPTER 128. Agriculture
DEPARTMENT AND COMMISSIONER
Mass. Ann. Laws ch. 128, s 2D (1994)

s 2D. Sponsors of, and Liability in Connection With, Equine Activities; Required Warnings; Definitions

(a) For the purposes of this section, the following words shall have the following meanings:—

“Engage in an equine activity”, 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 assisting a participant or show management. The term “engage in an equine activity” shall not include being a spectator at an equine activity, except in cases where the spectator places himself in an unauthorized area or in immediate proximity to the equine activity.

“Equine”, a horse, pony, mule, or donkey.

“Equine activity” (1) 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, 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.

“Equine activity sponsor”, an individual, group, club, partnership, or corporation, whether or not the sponsor is operating for profit or nonprofit, 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 of equine facilities, including but not limited to farms, stables, clubhouses, pony ride strings, fairs, and arenas at which the activity is held.

“Equine professional”, a person engaged for compensation:

(1) in instructing a participant or renting to a participant an equine for the purpose of riding, driving or being a passenger upon the equine; (2) in renting equipment or tack to a participant; (3) to provide daily care of horses boarded at an equine facility; or (4) to train an equine.

“Inherent risks of equine activities”, 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) certain hazards such as surface and subsurface conditions; (4) collisions with other equines or objects; (5) 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 animal or not acting within his ability.

“Participant”, any person, whether amateur or professional, who engages in an equine activity, whether or not a fee is paid to participate in such equine activity.

(b) Except as provided in subsection (c) , 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 and, except as provided in said subsection (c) , no participant nor 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.

(c) This section shall not apply to the racing meetings as defined by section one of chapter one hundred and twenty- eight A.

Nothing in subsection (b) 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) (i) 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 (ii) 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 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 latent condition which was known to the equine activity sponsor, equine professional, or person and for which warning signs, pursuant to subsection (d) , have not been conspicuously posted;

(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.

(d) (1) Every equine professional shall post and maintain signs which contain the warning notice specified in paragraph (2) . Such signs shall be placed in a clearly visible location in the proximity of the equine activity. The warning notice specified in said paragraph (2) 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 said paragraph (2) .

(2) The signs and contracts described in paragraph (1) shall contain the following notice:

WARNING

Under Massachusetts law, an equine professional 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 section 2D of chapter 128 of the General Laws.

HISTORY: Added by 1992, 212, s 1, approved, with emergency preamble, Oct 16, 1992.