

September 4, 2023

Dear Midpeninsula Regional Open Space Directors,

I think we can agree that the safety of all riders, especially children, and the welfare of horses at Bear Creek Stables (BCS) should be of the utmost priority. I think we can also agree that there is sufficient evidence to cause concern about this Permittee's ability to operate a clean and safe facility.

Even if you, as the directors, feel you must continue on the chosen path, you are not powerless. You still have the authority to take action by putting needed safeguards in place to mitigate potential risks and to prioritize the safety of paying riders on the public lands that you own—riders who are mostly children and inexperienced.

These could include:

- Appoint a Midpen subcommittee of directors tasked with specifically monitoring the stable operations for the coming year, and giving regular updates in open public meetings in order to allow public input.

This subcommittee could do the following:

- Ensure that the Permittee upholds the law of California Health and Safety Code § 25988. The Permittee must provide documentation that individually identifies each horse they are planning to stable at Bear Creek. The individual horses should be microchipped or marked using "humane methods." A list must be provided to Midpen with the name, breed, color, markings, size, age, sex, and photograph of each horse.
- In line with the law of California Health and Safety Code § 25988.d, stipulate and enforce that all Permittee horses meet the standards outlined in "*A Guide: Minimum Standards of Horse Care in the State of California*" published by the Center for Equine Health of the School of Veterinary Medicine of the University of California, Davis. (<https://vetext.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/sites/g/files/dgvnsk5616/files/inline-files/California-Minimum-Standards-2023.pdf>)
- Stipulate that no horse on this list be moved by the Permittee without first notifying Midpen directors of the location where the horse is being relocated. (This is a requirement imposed in other jurisdictions, because it prevents the Permittee from evading Animal Control welfare checks by simply trucking off horses.)
- Stipulate that the Permittee immediately notify Midpen directors when an injury or accident of any kind occurs to any Chaparral staff member, boarder, or visitor to the stables. A written procedure must be in place for immediate notice and documentation of injuries and accidents.
- Install clear signage informing all riders, boarders, and visitors of their rights and protections that includes Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District emergency contact information in the case of accidents, injuries, or any urgent safety issues.

- Require the Permittee to provide a written clean-up plan detailing how they will mitigate current hazards such as manure dumping near the creek, with a schedule of tasks and target dates for completion.
- Survey boarders in such a way that they can provide ongoing feedback to the directors without fearing reprisals or worry about their input causing the stable to close, such as an anonymous online survey.
- Invest in periodic unannounced veterinary inspections by a neutral veterinarian not associated with the Permittee or does business at BCS, who can give you an assessment indicating if the Chaparral horses being used by paying riders in public programs are healthy, safe, and fit to work.
- Institute a progressive discipline if the Permittee fails to comply with permit requirements and oversight requirements imposed by the Midpen subcommittee. This should be a list of financial and operational consequences such as financial fines, three strikes and permit is suspended.
- Require signed Permittees, not their designated representatives or contractors, to be on site for a minimum of 20 hours a week between the hours of 9am and 4pm. Require a salaried Chaparral manager (not a contract worker) to be present at all times during all hours of operation. Immediately start enforcing the requirement that the stable have adequate staffing and security measures in place.
- Via Together Bay Area or other collaborative venues, consult with other jurisdictions that have long-standing equestrian venues on public lands and have a long-standing model for running them safely by responsible Permittees. Examples of these equestrian models include Miwok Stables and Ocean Riders in Marin County, on National Park lands.

You are not powerless. The die is not cast. There are options available here other than the false choice of either closing the stables or allowing a Permittee with a questionable history to operate as they see fit, unbridled, and with minimal oversight.

*ATTACHMENTS: Photos of horses at Bear Creek Stables, Horse Body Condition Score table, class action lawsuit settlement information, negligence lawsuit settlement information, emails between SF Animal Control and SF Parks, email from member of the public about witnessing two separate incidents of concern allegedly involving children on uncontrolled horses, photos and documents regarding conditions at SF Golden Gate Park, text of California Health Code § 25988, older equine care information.*

# Horses at Bear Creek Stables

Photos taken on August 29, 2023











**NOT PICTURES OF THE SAME HORSE:**  
different bay horses in these photos. Some appear underweight, at least one appears emaciated, wound left unwrapped and exposed to flies, one appears to have rain rot. These are not all of the photos and not all of the horses that appear to need veterinary care and/or farrier services are shown here.



# Horse Body Condition Score

The recommendation by veterinarians and equine specialists is for horses to be maintained between a 4 to 6 Body Condition Score

Score	Condition	Description	
1	Poor	Horse is extremely emaciated. Spinous processes, ribs, tail head, hooks, and pins project prominently. Bone structure of withers, shoulders, and neck easily noticeable. No fatty tissue can be felt.	
2	Very thin	Emaciated. Slight fat covering over base of the spinous processes, transverse processes of lumbar (loin area) vertebrae feel rounded. Spinous processes, ribs, tail head, hooks, and pins are prominent. Withers, shoulders, and neck structures are faintly discernible.	
3	Thin	Fat is built up about halfway on spinous processes, transverse processes cannot be felt. Slight fat cover over ribs. Spinous processes and ribs are easily discernible. Tail head is prominent, but individual vertebrae cannot be visually identified. Hook bones appear rounded, but are easily discernible. Pin bones are not distinguishable. Withers, shoulders and neck are accentuated.	
4	Moderately thin	Negative crease along back (spinous processes of vertebrae protrude slightly above surrounding tissue). Faint outline of ribs is discernible. Fat can be felt around the tail head; however, the tail head may or may not be visible depending on the breed. Hook bones are not discernible. Withers, shoulders and neck are not obviously thin.	

5	Moderate	<p>Back is level. Ribs cannot be visually distinguished, but can be easily felt. Fat around tail head begins to feel spongy. Withers appear rounded over spinous processes. Shoulders and neck blend smoothly into body.</p>	
6	Moderately fleshy	<p>May have slight crease down back. Fat over ribs feels spongy. Fat around tail head feels soft. Fat begins to be deposited along the sides of the withers, behind shoulders and along neck.</p>	
7	Fleshy	<p>May have crease down back. Individual ribs can be felt, but with noticeable filling of fat between ribs. Fat around tail head is soft. Fat is deposited along withers, behind shoulders and along neck.</p>	
8	Fat	<p>Crease down back. Difficult to feel ribs. Fat around tail head is very soft. Area along withers is filled with fat. Area behind shoulder is filled with fat and flush with rest of the body. Noticeable thickening of neck. Fat is deposited along inner thighs.</p>	
9	Extremely fat	<p>Obvious crease down back. Patchy fat appears over ribs. Bulging fat around tail head, along withers, behind shoulders and along neck. Fat along inner thighs may rub together. Flank is filled with fat and flush with rest of the body.</p>	