



SEI STANDARD V3

INTRODUCTION, DEVELOPMENT BASIS & CERTIFICATION ARCHITECTURE

Sustainable Equestrian Initiative | 2026

Responsible equestrianism should be able to demonstrate that it is responsible.

Developed by the Sustainable Equestrian Initiative (SEI) team in collaboration with professional auditors and specialists in sustainability from Green Partner Audits & Consultancy B.V., the Netherlands.

SEI Standard V3 – Introduction

This Introduction defines the purpose, development basis, certification architecture, research foundations and principal external references of SEI Standard V3. It shall be read together with the Core Mandatory Layer (CML), and Benchmarking requirements, applicable Activity Modules (AM1–AM8), SEI certification rules and controlled guidance documents.

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1. The Sustainable Equestrian Initiative

The Sustainable Equestrian Initiative (SEI) is a voluntary certification scheme developed for organisations whose activities, facilities, products or services involve, support or materially affect horses or the equestrian sector. It provides a structured means of demonstrating responsible operation through defined requirements, objective evidence, measurable performance and independent third-party conformity assessment.

SEI recognises the breadth of modern equestrianism. The Standard is applicable to stables and equestrian centres, training and coaching, breeding and stud operations, horse therapy and care services, leisure and visitor activities, events and competitions, transport and logistics, and equestrian products and services suppliers. The modular structure allows the certification scope to reflect what an organisation actually does rather than forcing materially different activities into one generic checklist.

SEI was established in 2023 by professionals with experience in sustainability, auditing, certification, conformity assessment, framework development and operational management, united by a shared relationship with horses and a commitment to the long-term future of responsible equestrian activity.

SEI does not ask organisations merely to say that they are responsible. It requires them to demonstrate it with facts and objective evidence.

2. Why SEI Is Needed

The relationship between humans and horses has existed for centuries and has formed an important part of human history, culture, agriculture, transport, sport, recreation, therapy, education and community life. Today, that relationship continues through a diverse equestrian sector encompassing sport, racing, polo, breeding, training, leisure, tourism, therapy, professional services, transport and many other activities involving or supporting horses.

That relationship carries responsibility. Modern equestrian activities are increasingly scrutinised in relation to horse wellbeing, environmental impact, safety, ethics, social responsibility, commercial influence, sustainability claims and the justification for the continued use of horses in sport, recreation and other human activities. Legitimate concerns must be taken seriously and answered through appropriate controls, transparency, measurable performance and continual improvement.

At the same time, negative claims made about equestrian activities should themselves be capable of being substantiated. Individual incidents, images, opinions or unverified narratives should not automatically be treated as evidence that an entire sport, discipline, company or form of human-horse interaction is inherently irresponsible. Equally, tradition, popularity or economic importance cannot by themselves prove that an activity is responsible. SEI therefore applies an evidence-based approach in both directions.

The purpose of SEI is not to defend unacceptable practice, nor to provide automatic justification for the use of horses. Its purpose is to establish a credible, independently assessable framework through which organisations and people connected with horses can demonstrate responsible practice through objective evidence. This is particularly important where misinformation, speculation or unsupported negative claims

could contribute to pressure for the restriction or eradication of equestrian sports or other horse-related activities without a sufficiently evidenced understanding of actual practice.

SEI seeks to safeguard the future of responsible equestrian activity by giving organisations genuinely committed to horse wellbeing and sustainability a structured means of proving what they do, how they manage impacts, how they protect horses and people, how they respond when something goes wrong, and how they improve. Responsible equestrianism cannot be protected credibly by statements alone. It must be demonstrated.

The organisations, riders, professionals and businesses willing to subject their activities to defined Criteria, objective evidence requirements, measurement and independent third-party conformity assessment demonstrate a willingness to be accountable. In doing so, they help protect the credibility of the wider equestrian community and the future of the relationship between humans and horses.

The future of equestrianism should not depend only on what we say about our relationship with horses, but on what we can demonstrate through our actions, our evidence and the wellbeing of the horses themselves.

3. Development of the SEI Standard

SEI Standard V3 is the result of an extensive research, consultation and practical-development process undertaken specifically for the equestrian sector. Its Criteria were not developed from a single horse-welfare model, sustainability framework, sporting discipline or management-system standard. The development process examined the conditions in which horses are accommodated, bred, trained, coached, transported, treated, used in leisure and visitor activities, presented in events and competitions, and affected by equestrian products and professional services.

The SEI Criteria were developed by the Sustainable Equestrian Initiative team in collaboration with professional auditors from Green Partner Audits & Consultancy B.V., the Netherlands. The collaboration deliberately combined equestrian-sector knowledge with professional audit methodology so that the resulting requirements would be technically relevant, operationally realistic and objectively assessable.

The development team considered each requirement from four linked perspectives: what the organisation should control; what objective evidence should demonstrate implementation; how an auditor can verify implementation and effectiveness; and when failure should constitute a Non-Conformity. This led to the common SEI architecture of Criterion Statement, five Compliance Requirements, five Indicators, Verification and defined Minor/Major Non-Conformity conditions.

External standards, scientific publications, federation rules and professional guidance were not copied into SEI as substitute requirements. They were evaluated as sources of recognised principles, technical knowledge, regulatory context and sector practice. SEI then translated relevant findings into its own controlled, auditable requirements applicable to the defined SEI certification scope.

3.1 SEI Participant and SEI Certified

SEI is structured in two distinct stages: SEI Participant and SEI Certified. This distinction separates an organisation’s commitment and preparation from independently verified certification.



SEI Participant

An organisation becomes an SEI Participant when it commits to pursuing SEI Certification and begins using the SEI framework to prepare, collect evidence, assess its performance and implement improvements. Participant status demonstrates commitment to the certification process but does not constitute certification.

SEI Certified

When the organisation is ready, it proceeds to independent third-party certification against the applicable SEI Criteria. Only after successful completion of the certification process and a positive certification decision by the independent certification body, the organisation is awarded SEI Certified status.

This creates clear progression:

1 Discover SEI Understand what the Standard is, how the Core Mandatory Layer and the Activity Modules work, and how independent certification happens. 	2 Register & define your modules Register as an SEI Participant and activate your annual membership. The SEI Team then contacts you to identify the Activity Modules that apply to your activities. 	3 Create your profile Set up your organisation profile in the SEI Online Reporting Tool (SEI-ORT). Your profile and modules frame everything that follows. Your organisation will become SEI Participant. 
4 Prepare, measure & demonstrate Work through your applicable requirements at your own pace: present what you already do, upload objective evidence and record environmental performance. 	5 Request independent certification You decide when you are ready. Your work and evidence are submitted, and the transition to an independent Certification Body is coordinated. 	6 Plan & complete your audit The Certification Body confirms the scope, provides the audit cost, appoints a competent auditor and agrees the audit date with you. 
7 Address any non-conformities Where issues are identified, you correct them and submit evidence showing how the cause has been addressed to prevent recurrence. 	8 Independent certification decision The Certification Body reviews the evaluation and decides. SEI does not make or influence the certification decision. 	9 Celebrate & communicate Communicate your certified status responsibly and within the approved scope, and keep using SEI-ORT to demonstrate continual improvement. Your organisation will become SEI Certified. 

4. Research, Stakeholder and Operational Evidence Base

SEI developed the combined documentary research with stakeholder and operational input. The documentary review included scientific literature, veterinary and horse-welfare research, transport studies, competition and federation requirements, breeding and racing guidance, sustainability frameworks, environmental management principles, social-responsibility guidance, European regulatory material, consumer-protection requirements and conformity-assessment standards.

Documentary research was complemented by interviews, professional discussions and practical input from a broad spectrum of stakeholders. These included riders, horse owners, trainers, coaches, breeders, stable and equestrian-centre operators, veterinarians and horse-care professionals, event and competition stakeholders, equestrian companies, transport and logistics providers, product and service suppliers, sustainability professionals and professional auditors. The objective was to test whether the proposed requirements reflected operational reality and whether responsibility could be demonstrated through evidence that organisations could reasonably maintain.

Operational testing and review were used to determine whether requirements were practical and proportionate, whether evidence was available and auditable, whether wording produced repeatable assessment outcomes, whether environmental, social, economic and horse-wellbeing controls interacted as intended, and whether data requested for benchmarking could realistically be collected. Findings from practical application were used to strengthen wording, remove duplication and close identified control gaps.

The resulting methodology therefore combines international standards, European regulatory context, equestrian-sector knowledge, scientific and professional guidance, stakeholder input, practical application, independent conformity assessment and measurable performance.

5. The Four SEI Sustainability Pillars

SEI Standard V3 is built around four interdependent pillars:

- Environment
- Social Responsibility
- Economic Sustainability
- Horse Wellbeing

Environment addresses resource consumption and environmental impacts associated with equestrian activities and supporting operations, including greenhouse gas emissions, energy, water, wastewater, waste, manure and bedding, harmful substances, air quality, land, soil, ecosystems, biodiversity, infrastructure and other material environmental impacts.

Social Responsibility addresses responsibilities towards employees, riders, participants, beneficiaries, visitors, volunteers, contractors, suppliers, communities and wider society. It includes competence, safety, safeguarding, accessibility, responsible employment, community impact, culture, equestrian heritage, communication and transparency.

Economic Sustainability recognises that responsible equestrian activities require sufficient organisational and financial resilience to maintain essential horse care, competent personnel, veterinary provision, safe infrastructure, legal compliance and environmental controls over time. Cost or commercial pressure shall not be used to justify material weakening of these responsibilities.

Horse Wellbeing addresses the physical, behavioural and mental condition of horses affected by activities within the certification scope. It includes accommodation, nutrition, water, movement, social contact, fitness, workload, rest, recovery, veterinary care, handling, equipment, transport, biosecurity, environmental conditions and the authority to intervene when wellbeing may be compromised.

Where commercial, competitive, instructional, visitor, scheduling or other pressures conflict with a necessary horse-wellbeing decision, horse wellbeing shall take precedence.

6. The 15 SEI Core Topics

1. Governance & Legal Compliance
2. Communication & Transparency
3. Greenhouse Gas Emissions
4. Energy Efficiency & Use
5. Horse Wellbeing
6. Ecosystems & Biodiversity
7. Fresh Water Resources
8. Social & Cultural Responsibility
9. Economic Responsibility
10. Air Quality Protection
11. Wastewater Control
12. Solid Waste Handling
13. Environmentally Harmful Substances
14. Land Use & Infrastructure Impact
15. Education, Training & Awareness

The Core Topics establish common subject matter across SEI. They do not create a rigid one-topic/one-Criterion structure. Equestrian activities are interconnected and individual Criteria may contribute to several Core Topics. The depth of coverage is determined by material relevance, activity risk, control and influence rather than by an artificial numerical distribution.

7. How SEI Certification Is Structured

SEI Certification = CML + Benchmarking + Applicable Activity Module(s)

The Core Mandatory Layer (CML) establishes the mandatory legal, governance, responsibility, competence, risk-management, evidence, corrective-action and communication foundation applicable to every applicant.

The Benchmarking layer, supported through the SEI Online Reporting Tool (SEI-ORT), establishes common quantitative measurement, normalisation, reporting and benchmarking principles for material operational and sustainability performance.

Module	Activity	Principal application
AM1	Stables and Equestrian Centres	Facilities where horses are accommodated, managed, cared for or supported.
AM2	Training and Coaching Activities	Organisations providing equestrian instruction, coaching, horse training or structured learning activities.
AM3	Breeding and Stud Operations	Breeding establishments, studs and organisations undertaking equine reproductive and youngstock activities.
AM4	Horse Therapy and Care Services	Equine-assisted therapy, care and related services involving horses and beneficiaries.
AM5	Leisure, Tourism and Equestrian Activities	Riding, trekking, trails, visitor activities, horse-drawn activities and comparable leisure or visitor services.
AM6	Events and Competitions	Competitions, examinations, racing, polo, shows and organised activities involving ranking, qualification, assessment or public presentation.
AM7	Equestrian Transport & Logistics	Organisations transporting live horses by road, air, sea or multimodal arrangements, including specialist transport and logistics services.
AM8	Equestrian Products & Services Suppliers	Manufacturers, producers, distributors, installers, retailers, farriers, veterinary/specialist service providers, trailer/equipment manufacturers, manure/waste contractors and comparable equestrian suppliers.

Equivalent objective evidence may be recognised across Modules where it adequately represents all relevant activities, horses, facilities, personnel and operating conditions. Where an organisation performs several material activities, all applicable Activity Modules are included within the proposed scope and confirmed through the Certification Body process.

8. Scale of SEI Standard V3

Before the addition of the detailed benchmarking requirements, the controlled CML and AM1–AM8 architecture contains 263 Criteria and 1.315 individual Compliance Requirements. Every Criterion contains five Compliance Requirements, creating a consistent requirement structure across the Standard.

SEI Module	Criteria	Compliance Requirements
CML – Legal Compliance & Policy	18	90
AM1 – Stables and Equestrian Centres	29	145
AM2 – Training and Coaching Activities	25	125
AM3 – Breeding and Stud Operations	29	145
AM4 – Horse Therapy and Care Services	30	150
AM5 – Leisure, Tourism and Equestrian Activities	37	185
AM6 – Events and Competitions	54	270
AM7 – Equestrian Transport & Logistics	21	105
AM8 – Equestrian Products & Services Suppliers	20	100
TOTAL	263	1.315

These figures describe the complete current normative architecture and do not represent the number of requirements automatically applicable to every applicant. The actual certification scope depends on the organisation, its activities and the applicability of individual requirements. Non-applicability must be justified and evaluated within the conformity-assessment process.

9. Compliance and Performance are Both Required

Conformity asks: are the necessary controls implemented and effective? Performance asks: what do the results demonstrate?

A licence, procedure, training record, policy or management statement may provide evidence, but possession of documentation alone does not demonstrate effective implementation. SEI therefore examines objective evidence, actual practice, implementation, effectiveness and, where reasonably measurable, quantitative performance.

The management logic follows Plan–Do–Check–Act: establish responsibilities, risks and controls; implement them; monitor and evaluate results; correct deficiencies and use evidence to improve. This approach is compatible with recognised management-system principles while remaining specific to the SEI certification scheme.

10. Measurement and Benchmarking

Performance should be measured wherever it can reasonably be measured.

Depending on certification scope, SEI may require quantitative information on horse numbers and horse-days, participants and visitors, horse workload and utilisation, event and competition activity, energy, fuel, greenhouse gas emissions, water, wastewater, waste, manure and bedding, transport and travel, land use, employees, incidents, veterinary interventions, horse-wellbeing outcomes and other material indicators.

The benchmarking framework uses relevant operational denominators so that absolute consumption and outcomes can be interpreted in context. Examples include kWh per horse-day, litres per horse-day, kilograms of waste per visitor, tonnes CO₂e per event, kilometres travelled per horse, horse-use hours per horse and welfare interventions per defined activity unit.

Benchmarking is intended to establish baselines, identify trends and abnormal performance, support continual improvement and, where sufficient comparable verified data are available, enable meaningful comparison between appropriately comparable operations. It is not intended to rank fundamentally different equestrian activities through a single aggregate score.

11. European Regulatory Basis and International Application

SEI is a European voluntary certification scheme and is developed principally within the regulatory, sustainability and conformity-assessment context of the European Union. International scientific evidence, veterinary guidance, federation requirements and recognised practice are also considered where they materially contribute to responsible equestrian operation.

SEI does not replace applicable legislation, licences, veterinary requirements, professional obligations or governing-body rules. Each organisation remains responsible for identifying and complying with mandatory international, national, regional and local requirements applicable to its jurisdiction and activities. Where a

mandatory requirement establishes a higher or more specific obligation than SEI, the mandatory requirement prevails within its applicable scope.

Directive (EU) 2024/825 on Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition is particularly relevant to sustainability communication and labels. SEI therefore places strong emphasis on specific, accurate, current and evidence-based claims, independent conformity assessment, certification-scope clarity and control of certification marks. SEI certification does not automatically substantiate every environmental or sustainability claim made by a certified organisation; each claim remains the responsibility of the organisation and must remain proportionate to the evidence available.

12. Evidence, Audit and Independent Conformity Assessment

SEI is the Scheme Owner. SEI develops and maintains the Standard, normative criteria, scheme rules and associated technical documentation. SEI does not itself grant individual certification decisions where certification is operated through an independent Certification Body.

The certification architecture is designed for third-party product, process and service certification aligned with ISO/IEC 17065. The Certification Body controls the certification process, including application review, evaluation, independent review, certification decision, certification documentation, surveillance, changes affecting certification, complaints and appeals, suspension and withdrawal.

Audit and audit-type evaluation activities are designed to follow an evidence-based, risk-based and competence-based methodology aligned with ISO 19011. Audit criteria are the applicable SEI Compliance Requirements and other mandatory certification requirements. Objective evidence may include documents, records, measurements, interviews, observations, calculations, samples, photographs, veterinary information and other verifiable information relevant to the requirement being assessed.

The auditor evaluates evidence and reports findings. The auditor does not independently grant certification. Review and certification decision functions remain controlled by the Certification Body in accordance with the certification scheme and applicable ISO/IEC 17065 arrangements.

SEI defines requirements → the organisation demonstrates conformity → the auditor evaluates evidence → the Certification Body reviews and decides.

13. What SEI Certification Means

SEI certification provides independent evidence that an organisation has been assessed against the applicable SEI requirements within a defined certification scope and has demonstrated that relevant responsibilities, operational controls and performance-monitoring arrangements are established and implemented.

Certification does not mean that an organisation has no environmental impact, that accidents can never occur, that no horse-wellbeing concern can arise or that every aspect of its performance is superior to every other organisation. Nor does it replace decisions of competent authorities, courts, insurers, veterinary professionals or sporting bodies.

The occurrence of an accident or adverse event does not automatically demonstrate systemic irresponsibility. A credible certification framework should instead make it possible to establish whether foreseeable risks had been identified, whether controls were in place, whether the event was appropriately managed, whether factual communication was supported by verified information, and whether corrective action was taken. SEI therefore strengthens an organisation's ability to explain and demonstrate its operating position through evidence rather than assertion.

Certification claims must remain within the certified scope. Expressions such as "zero impact", "carbon neutral", "100% sustainable", "the most sustainable" or "perfect horse welfare" are not automatically substantiated by SEI certification and require their own specific evidence and legal assessment.

14. Continual Improvement

SEI does not regard sustainability as a static certification result. Responsible organisations are expected to understand their baseline, evaluate performance, identify deficiencies and opportunities, implement appropriate actions and demonstrate improvement over successive certification cycles.

Improvement shall remain proportionate to the nature, scale, impacts and resources of the organisation. Efficiency or cost reduction shall not be pursued at the expense of horse wellbeing, safety, legal compliance or another material responsibility. Likewise, environmental improvement shall be assessed for its wider consequences.



15. Protecting the Human–Horse Relationship Through Evidence

SEI recognises that the relationship between people and horses is part of a long and evolving human history. Protecting that relationship does not mean resisting scrutiny or defending every existing practice. It means ensuring that responsible equestrian activities are capable of responding to legitimate concerns, correcting unacceptable practice and demonstrating their performance transparently.

The Standard therefore provides a route for riders, organisations, professionals, suppliers and companies connected with horses to show that they have chosen accountability. By voluntarily accepting defined requirements, independent assessment, objective evidence and measurable performance, they contribute to the credibility of equestrianism as a whole.

SEI also seeks to reduce the risk that unsupported claims, incomplete information or isolated incidents are treated as representative of an entire activity without proper evidence. This is why the Standard includes controls for incident recording, investigation, corrective action, verified public communication and responsible claims. Transparency is not treated as a public-relations exercise; it is part of demonstrable responsibility.

SEI exists to help ensure that responsible equestrianism remains credible, respected, transparent, resilient and capable of continuing for generations to come.

16. Standards, Frameworks and Technical Alignment

Standard framework	Author issuer	Principal SEI alignment
ISO 9001:2015 – Quality management systems – Requirements	International Organization for Standardization (ISO)	Process management, competence, documented information, risk-based thinking, corrective action, performance evaluation and continual improvement.
ISO 14001:2015 – Environmental management systems – Requirements with guidance for use	International Organization for Standardization (ISO)	Environmental aspects and impacts, compliance obligations, operational control, objectives, monitoring, performance evaluation and continual improvement.

ISO 50001:2018 – Energy management systems – Requirements with guidance for use	International Organization for Standardization (ISO)	Energy review, significant energy uses, baselines, indicators, measurement, efficiency and continual improvement.
ISO 26000:2010 – Guidance on social responsibility	International Organization for Standardization (ISO)	Governance, human rights, labour practices, fair operating practices, consumer issues, community involvement and stakeholder responsibility. ISO 26000 is guidance and is not a certifiable management-system standard.
ISO 19011:2018 – Guidelines for auditing management systems	International Organization for Standardization (ISO)	Audit principles, audit programme management, competence, independence, sampling, objective evidence, findings, conclusions and risk-based auditing.
ISO/IEC 17065:2012 – Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services	International Organization for Standardization / International Electrotechnical Commission (ISO/IEC)	Third-party certification architecture, impartiality, competence, evaluation, review, certification decision, certification documentation, surveillance, claims and certification marks.

SEI alignment with these standards does not mean that SEI is certified or endorsed by ISO, nor that certification to one of these standards automatically establishes SEI conformity. External certification may support objective evidence only to the extent that its verified scope demonstrably addresses the applicable SEI requirement.

17. Principal Documentary and Technical Sources Reviewed

The following register identifies principal documents and technical references directly reviewed during the development and refinement of the SEI Standard. Document titles are presented as published titles rather than as source-file names. Where an individual author is not identified in the source, the issuing institution is stated.

The source base is intentionally multidisciplinary. SEI does not rely on a single welfare model, sporting federation, environmental standard or transport framework. The Criteria were developed by comparing and translating relevant scientific, veterinary, operational, regulatory, sustainability, risk-management and conformity-assessment evidence into auditable SEI requirements.

17.1 International Standards, Auditing and Conformity Assessment

ISO 9001:2015 – Quality management systems – Requirements — International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Relevance to SEI: Process management, organisational responsibility, competence, documented information, risk-based thinking, corrective action and continual improvement.

ISO 14001:2015 – Environmental management systems – Requirements with guidance for use — International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Relevance to SEI: Environmental aspects and impacts, compliance obligations, operational control, environmental objectives, monitoring, performance evaluation and continual improvement.

ISO 50001:2018 – Energy management systems – Requirements with guidance for use — International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Relevance to SEI: Energy review, significant energy uses, baselines, energy performance indicators, measurement, efficiency and continual improvement.

ISO 26000:2010 – Guidance on social responsibility — International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Relevance to SEI: Governance, human rights, labour practices, environmental responsibility, fair operating practices, consumer issues, community involvement and stakeholder responsibility.

ISO 19011:2018 – Guidelines for auditing management systems — International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Relevance to SEI: Audit principles, audit-programme management, auditor competence, sampling, objective evidence, findings, conclusions and risk-based auditing.

ISO/IEC 17065:2012 – Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services — International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC). Relevance to SEI: Third-party certification architecture, impartiality, competence, evaluation, review, certification decision, surveillance, complaints, appeals and control of certification claims.

17.2 Horse Wellbeing, Veterinary Practice and Responsible Horse Management

FEI Code of Conduct for the Welfare of the Horse — Fédération Équestre Internationale (FEI). Relevance to SEI: Horse management, training methods, farriery and tack, transport, fitness to compete, medication, event conditions, veterinary response and the principle that horse welfare shall remain paramount.

FEI Veterinary Regulations — Fédération Équestre Internationale (FEI). Relevance to SEI: Veterinary oversight, identification, horse inspections, fitness to compete, biosecurity, medication control, treatment, emergency veterinary provision and event horse welfare.

Equine veterinarians and equine welfare – Whitepaper — Committee on Equine Welfare, Equine Section of the Royal Dutch Veterinary Association (KNMvD); endorsed by the Federation of European Equine Veterinary Associations (FEEVA). Relevance to SEI: Husbandry, social contact, free movement, nutrition, veterinary care, human–horse collaboration, training aids, sport, transport, breeding and end-of-life considerations.

A Guide to Horse Welfare and Responsible Horse Ownership — Horse Sport Ireland (HSI). Relevance to SEI: Responsible ownership, physical and mental wellbeing, identification, breeding responsibility, training, competition, care throughout life and reporting of cruelty or neglect.

IFHA Minimum Horse Welfare Guidelines — International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA), Horse Welfare Committee. Relevance to SEI: Nutrition, environment, health, behaviour, mental state, handler competence, racing and breeding welfare, prevention of avoidable pain and distress, and positive welfare outcomes.

17.3 Events, Competitions, Racing and Polo

FEI General Regulations – 24th edition — Fédération Équestre Internationale (FEI). Relevance to SEI: Event and competition governance, participant and horse eligibility, horse identification, person responsible, protection of athletes and horses, officials, appeals, disciplinary processes and communications.

Sustainability Handbook for Event Organisers — Fédération Équestre Internationale (FEI). Relevance to SEI: Event planning, venue selection, energy, water, waste, procurement, transport, logistics, temporary infrastructure, emissions, stabling, stakeholder engagement, measurement and event legacy.

European Polo Championship – Championship Procedures 2024 — Federation of International Polo (FIP). Relevance to SEI: Polo-event governance, organising responsibilities, team entry, pony requirements, veterinary rules and recommendations, pony welfare, inspection and competition procedures.

Equestrian Establishment Risk Management Guide — SEIB Insurance Brokers Ltd. Relevance to SEI: Risk assessment, health and safety management, riding schools, studs, livery, training and competition environments, accident prevention, incident review and operational risk controls.

17.4 Transport and Logistics of Horses

IFHA Transportation Welfare Guidelines — International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA), International Movement of Horses Committee. Relevance to SEI: Transport risk, professional shipping agents, journey planning, fitness, vehicles, water and feed, rest and recovery, air transport and emergency arrangements.

Welfare of equidae during transport — EFSA Panel on Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW), Nielsen S.S. et al., 2022. Relevance to SEI: Scientific assessment of transport welfare consequences, hazards, loading and unloading, microclimate, space allowance, journey duration and fitness for transport.

The impacts of transport on a horse's well-being — Christine Briant, Isabelle Barrier-Battut, Claudette Bruna, Clothilde Dubois and M. Odell – Institut français du cheval et de l'équitation (IFCE). Relevance to SEI: Behavioural and physiological effects of transport, stress indicators, travelling conditions and practical welfare measures.

The transport of equines: challenges and recommendations for amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 — World Horse Welfare. Relevance to SEI: Fitness for transport, journey times, watering and feeding, means of transport, loading and unloading, enforcement, long-distance transport, air and sea transport.

Regulations for horse movement within and into the European Union with particular regard to the movement of sport horses — Dr Alf-Eckbert Füssel – European Commission, DG SANCO / Animal Health. Relevance to SEI: Horse movement, health status, registered horses, movement controls and the regulatory context for sport-horse movement within and into the European Union.

17.5 Sustainability, Consumer Protection and Responsible Claims

Directive (EU) 2024/825 on Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition — European Parliament and Council of the European Union. Relevance to SEI: Consumer protection, environmental and sustainability claims, sustainability labels, future environmental performance claims, transparency and third-party monitoring.

Proposal for a Directive on substantiation and communication of explicit environmental claims (Green Claims Directive), COM(2023) 166 — European Commission. Relevance to SEI: Policy direction on substantiation, transparency, verification and communication of explicit environmental claims. Referenced as a proposal, not as adopted final legislation.

Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — United Nations. Relevance to SEI: Global sustainable-development context and material alignment of SEI environmental, social, economic and governance objectives with relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

17.6 Supporting Scientific Foundations Identified within Reviewed Sources

Updating animal welfare thinking: Moving beyond the “Five Freedoms” towards “A Life Worth Living” — David J. Mellor, 2016. Relevance to SEI: Scientific development of contemporary welfare thinking beyond minimum avoidance of negative states towards positive welfare experience.

Operational details of the Five Domains Model and its key applications to the assessment and management of animal welfare — David J. Mellor, 2017. Relevance to SEI: Five Domains Model application to nutrition, environment, health, behaviour and mental or affective state, supporting structured welfare assessment.

The Welfare of Horses — Natalie Waran (editor), 2007. Relevance to SEI: Scientific and professional background on horse needs, welfare assessment and responsible management; referenced within reviewed horse-welfare guidance.

18. Status and Use of External References

References to international standards, European Union legislation, federations, veterinary organisations, competent authorities, scientific literature, sustainability frameworks and the United Nations indicate areas of technical influence, alignment, regulatory relevance or recognised practice. Unless expressly stated otherwise, they do not indicate endorsement, accreditation, recognition or approval of SEI by the referenced organisation.

Compliance with SEI does not replace applicable legislation, professional obligations, governing-body rules or certification against another standard. Where an external legal requirement establishes a higher or more specific mandatory obligation, that requirement prevails within its applicable scope. Where SEI establishes an additional voluntary requirement that does not conflict with law, conformity with that requirement remains necessary within the applicable certification scope.

SEI may revise its source base as scientific knowledge, law, technical standards and equestrian practice evolve. The purpose of referencing external material is to demonstrate the development basis of the scheme and support technical transparency; the normative certification requirements remain those contained in the controlled SEI scheme documents.

19. Terms and Definitions

For the purposes of SEI Standard V3, the following terms and definitions apply. Explanations are intentionally concise. Where applicable legislation, a competent authority or a controlling international standard establishes a more specific mandatory definition, that definition takes precedence within its applicable scope.

Term	SEI Definition
Accreditation	Formal recognition by an authorised accreditation body that a conformity assessment body is competent to perform specified conformity assessment activities. Accreditation shall not be confused with SEI certification of an organisation.
Activity Module (AM)	A controlled part of SEI Standard V3 containing Criteria and Compliance Requirements applicable to a defined category of equestrian activity, product or service. Only Modules within the approved certification scope are assessed.
Animal Welfare Horse Welfare	The physical and mental state of an animal in relation to the conditions in which it lives, works and is managed. Within SEI this includes health, nutrition, behaviour, fitness, workload, recovery, handling and protection from avoidable pain, distress, injury and suffering.
Audit	A systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining objective evidence and evaluating it against defined audit criteria to determine the extent to which requirements are fulfilled.
Auditor	A competent and impartial person assigned to conduct audit or evaluation activities and evaluate objective evidence against specified requirements. The auditor reports findings but does not independently grant SEI certification.
Benchmark	A defined reference point against which measured performance may be compared. Benchmarks may use historical performance, comparable verified operations, technical references or other controlled datasets appropriate to the indicator.

Benchmarking	Systematic measurement and comparison of operational performance over time or against an appropriate reference dataset. SEI benchmarking supports understanding of efficiency, trends and improvement through normalised indicators.
CAB Certification Body	An independent third-party conformity assessment body operating certification activities within its defined scope. Under SEI, the Certification Body controls the certification process and decision in accordance with the applicable scheme rules.
Certification	Third-party confirmation that specified SEI certification requirements have been fulfilled within an approved certification scope. Certification does not replace legal compliance or competent-authority approval.
Certification Scope	The products, processes, services, activities, locations and applicable SEI Modules proposed for certification and confirmed through the Certification Body process. Certification claims shall not extend beyond this approved scope.
Claim	Any statement or representation capable of influencing how an organisation, product, service, activity or performance is understood. Relevant claims shall be accurate, appropriately scoped, current and supported by sufficient evidence.
Competence Competency	Demonstrated ability to apply relevant knowledge, skills, training and experience to achieve an intended result. Competence shall be appropriate to the responsibility, risk and technical complexity of the function.
Compliance Requirement (CR)	A mandatory and auditable requirement established under an SEI Criterion. Compliance Requirements define the specific controls or outcomes that shall be demonstrated through objective evidence.
Conformity	Fulfilment of an applicable requirement, supported by sufficient objective evidence demonstrating implementation and, where relevant, effective operation.

Corrective Action	Action taken to eliminate the cause of a detected non-conformity and prevent recurrence. Corrective action addresses underlying cause and effectiveness rather than only the immediate symptom.
Criterion Criteria	A defined subject or control area within the CML or an Activity Module against which conformity is assessed. Each Criterion is supported by five mandatory Compliance Requirements and associated Indicators and Verification provisions.
Documented Information	Information needed to operate, control or demonstrate activities and results. It may include policies, procedures, registers, licences, measurements, photographs, invoices, veterinary records and electronic records.
Environmental Aspect	An element of an organisation's activities, products or services that interacts, or has the potential to interact, with the environment.
Environmental Impact	A change to the environment, adverse or beneficial, resulting wholly or partly from an organisation's environmental aspects.
Environmental Management System (EMS)	The part of an organisation's management system used to manage environmental aspects, compliance obligations, risks, objectives, operational controls and environmental performance.
Evidence / Objective Evidence	Verifiable information supporting the existence, implementation or effectiveness of a requirement. Evidence may arise from records, measurements, observations, interviews, calculations, sampling or other reliable means.
External Audit	An audit conducted by a party independent of the organisation being assessed. Within SEI certification, external evaluation is undertaken through the authorised Certification Body.

FEI	Fédération Équestre Internationale, the international governing body for equestrian sport within its international sporting remit. Applicable FEI rules remain binding where relevant to the activity.
FEEVA	Federation of European Equine Veterinary Associations, representing equine veterinary associations and contributing professional expertise on equine health, veterinary practice and horse welfare.
EEF	European Equestrian Federation, the European umbrella organisation representing national equestrian federations and recognised by the FEI as the continental confederation for European equestrian sport.
FIP	Federation of International Polo, the international governing organisation for polo. Applicable FIP and national polo requirements may form part of an organisation's compliance obligations.
FVE	Federation of Veterinarians of Europe, a European veterinary representative organisation addressing professional veterinary, animal-health, public-health and animal-welfare matters.
IFHA	International Federation of Horseracing Authorities, supporting cooperation and harmonisation among horseracing authorities, including racing, breeding, integrity, movement and racehorse welfare.
Greenwashing	Environmental or sustainability communication that is false, misleading, unsubstantiated, exaggerated or capable of creating an unjustified impression of performance.
Horse	For SEI purposes, the term includes horses, ponies and other equids falling within the applicable certification activity unless a Criterion, legal requirement or technical context requires a more specific definition.

Horse Wellbeing	The overall physical and mental condition of the horse resulting from health, management, environment, human interaction and the activities required of the horse. SEI uses wellbeing as an operational concept encompassing welfare protection and positive management outcomes.
Indicator	A qualitative or quantitative measure used to evaluate implementation, performance, condition or change. Indicators support assessment but do not replace mandatory Compliance Requirements unless expressly specified.
Internal Audit	A systematic audit conducted by or on behalf of the organisation to evaluate its own conformity and effectiveness. Internal auditors should be sufficiently competent and objective in relation to the activities examined.
International Regulation	A binding requirement arising from an international or supranational legal or governing framework where that requirement has legal, contractual, membership or sporting applicability to the organisation.
International Standard	A standard developed and approved through an internationally recognised standardisation process for common and repeated application. International standards are generally voluntary unless incorporated into law, contract or another binding obligation.
ISO	International Organization for Standardization, an independent, non-governmental international organisation through which national standards bodies and experts develop internationally agreed standards.
Legal Requirement	A mandatory obligation established through applicable legislation, regulation, permit, licence, order or other legally enforceable instrument.
Life Cycle	Consecutive and interrelated stages associated with a product, material, service or activity, from acquisition or origin through use to end-of-life, recovery or disposal.

Local Authority	A public administrative or regulatory body exercising legally established responsibilities within a defined local or regional jurisdiction.
Local Community Local People	People living, working or maintaining recognised cultural, economic or social interests in the area materially affected by the organisation's activities. SEI does not prescribe a universal geographical radius.
Major Non-Conformity	A significant failure of a requirement or control system, including circumstances creating material legal, horse-wellbeing, environmental, safety, integrity or certification risk.
Minor Non-Conformity	An isolated or limited failure to fully satisfy a requirement where the overall control system remains substantially effective and no material risk is demonstrated.
Non-Conformity (NC)	Non-fulfilment of an applicable SEI Compliance Requirement or other mandatory certification requirement, supported by objective evidence and classified under the applicable NC conditions.
Organisation	The legal entity, enterprise, association, facility or controlled operation applying for or holding SEI certification. The organisation is responsible for demonstrating conformity throughout its certification scope.
Person People Responsible	The individual or individuals formally assigned authority and accountability for implementing, supervising or maintaining a defined requirement or operational control.
Policy	A controlled governance document establishing how an organisation manages a defined subject, including responsibilities, controls, procedures and consequences or escalation where applicable. Commitments are communicated through the Statement.
Statement	A formal public or organisational declaration of commitments, intentions and position. Within SEI, the Sustainability & Horse Wellbeing Statement communicates the organisation's commitments and shall be consistent with actual controls and evidence.

Requirement	A need or expectation that is stated, mandatory or otherwise formally established. Within SEI, normative obligations are normally expressed using “shall”.
Responsible Claim	A claim that is accurate, specific, understandable, appropriately scoped and proportionate to supporting evidence and that does not omit material information or imply benefits beyond those objectively demonstrated.
Risk	The effect of uncertainty on an intended outcome, considered in relation to likelihood, consequence and relevant circumstances. SEI risks may relate to horse wellbeing, people, environment, compliance, reputation or operational continuity.
Risk Assessment	A systematic process for identifying hazards or uncertainties, analysing likelihood and consequences, evaluating significance and determining appropriate controls.
SEI	The Sustainable Equestrian Initiative and the certification scheme that establishes the SEI Standard, associated certification rules, assessment architecture and benchmarking framework.
SEI-ORT	The SEI Online Reporting Tool used to collect, calculate, normalise and track sustainability and operational performance data according to the certification scope and benchmarking methodology.
Significant	Sufficiently important, material or consequential to require specific management attention or control, considering scale, severity, frequency, legal exposure, stakeholder concern or potential consequence.
Stakeholder Interested Party	A person, group or organisation that can affect, be affected by or perceive itself to be affected by the organisation’s decisions or activities.
Sustainability	Responsible management of environmental, social, economic and horse-wellbeing considerations so that present activities remain viable without creating unacceptable impacts or undermining long-term capacity and resilience.

Sustainability Claim	A statement concerning environmental, social, economic, horse-wellbeing or broader sustainability characteristics or performance. Such claims shall correspond with actual scope and be supported by current verifiable evidence.
Third-Party Assessment	Conformity assessment performed by a person or body independent of the organisation being assessed and independent of parties having a direct interest in the assessment outcome.
Verification	Confirmation through provision and evaluation of objective evidence that specified requirements have been fulfilled. Verification may include document review, observation, interviews, measurements, calculations and sampling.
Working Equine	A horse or other equid undertaking physical work as part of an organised service or activity, including pulling a carriage, wagon or comparable vehicle. Workload, fitness, equipment, environmental conditions, rest and recovery shall be appropriately controlled.