

State of Wisconsin



1995 Senate Bill 478

Date of enactment: **April 20, 1996**

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1995 WISCONSIN ACT 256

AN ACT to create 895.481 of the statutes; relating to: limitation of civil liability related to equine activities.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. 895.481 of the statutes is created to read:
895.481 Civil liability exemption; equine activities. (1) In this section:

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

(b) "Equine activity" means any of the following:

1. Shows, fairs, competitions, performances or parades that involve any breeds of equines and any equine disciplines, including combined training, competitive trail riding, cutting, dressage, driving, endurance trail riding, English or western performance riding, grand prix jumping, horse racing, hunter and jumper shows, hunting, polo, pulling, rodeos, 3-day events and western games.

2. Equine training or teaching.

3. Boarding of equines.

4. Riding, inspecting or evaluating an equine belonging to another, regardless of whether the owner of the equine receives monetary or other consideration for the use of the equine or permits the riding, inspection or evaluation of the equine.

5. Riding, training or driving an equine or being a passenger on an equine.

6. Riding, training or driving a vehicle pulled by an equine or being a passenger on a vehicle pulled by an equine.

7. Assisting in the medical treatment of an equine.
8. Shoeing of an equine.
9. Assisting a person participating in an activity listed in subs. 1. to 8.

(c) "Equine activity sponsor" means a person, whether operating for profit or nonprofit, who organizes or provides the facilities for an equine activity, including owners or operators of arenas, clubs, fairs, schools, stables and therapeutic riding programs.

(d) "Equine professional" means a person engaged for compensation in the rental of equines or equine equipment or tack or in the instruction of a person in the riding or driving of an equine or in being a passenger upon an equine.

(e) "Inherent risk of equine activities" means a danger or condition that is an integral part of equine activities, including all of the following:

1. The propensity of an equine to behave in a way that may result in injury or death to a person on or near it.

2. The unpredictability of an equine's reaction to a sound, movement or unfamiliar object, person or animal.

3. A collision with an object or another animal.

4. The potential for a person participating in an equine activity to act in a negligent manner, to fail to control the equine or to not act within his or her ability.

5. Natural hazards, including surface and subsurface conditions.

(f) "Property" means real property and buildings, structures and improvements on the real property.

* Section 991.11, WISCONSIN STATUTES 1993-94: Effective date of acts. "Every act and every portion of an act enacted by the legislature over the governor's partial veto which does not expressly prescribe the time when it takes effect shall take effect on the day after its date of publication as designated" by the secretary of state [the date of publication may not be more than 10 working days after the date of enactment].

(g) “Spectator” means a person who attends or watches an equine activity but does not participate in the equine activity or perform any act or omission related to the equine activity that contributes to the injury or death of a participant in the equine activity.

(2) Except as provided in subs. (3) and (6), a person, including an equine activity sponsor or an equine professional, is immune from civil liability for acts or omissions related to his or her participation in equine activities if a person participating in the equine activity is injured or killed as the result of an inherent risk of equine activities.

(3) The immunity under sub. (2) does not apply if the person seeking immunity does any of the following:

(a) Provides equipment or tack that he or she knew or should have known was faulty and the faulty equipment or tack causes the injury or death.

(b) Provides an equine to a person and fails to make a reasonable effort to determine the ability of the person to engage safely in an equine activity or to safely manage the particular equine provided based on the person’s representations of his or her ability.

(c) Fails to conspicuously post warning signs of a dangerous inconspicuous condition known to him or her on the property that he or she owns, leases, rents or is otherwise in lawful control of or possession.

(d) Acts in a wilful or wanton disregard for the safety of the person.

(e) Intentionally causes the injury or death.

(3m) A person whose only involvement in an equine activity is as a spectator shall not be considered to be participating in the equine activity.

(4) Every equine professional shall post and maintain signs in a clearly visible location on or near stables, corals or arenas owned, operated or controlled by the equine professional. The signs shall be white with black lettering, each letter a minimum of one inch in height, and shall contain the following notice: “NOTICE: A person who is engaged for compensation in the rental of equines or equine equipment or tack or in the instruction of a person in the riding or driving of an equine or in being a passenger upon an equine is not liable for the injury or death of a person involved in equine activities resulting from the inherent risks of equine activities, as defined in section 895.481 (1) (e) of the Wisconsin Statutes.”

(5) If an equine professional uses a written contract for the rental of equines or equine equipment or tack or for the instruction of a person in the riding, driving or being a passenger upon an equine, the contract shall contain the notice set forth in sub. (4) in clearly readable bold print of not less than the same size as the print used in the remainder of the contract.

(6) This section does not limit the liability of a person under any applicable products liability laws.

(7) This section does not limit the immunity created under s. 895.52.

SECTION 2. Initial applicability.

(1) This act first applies to equine activities occurring on the effective date of this subsection.