



Code of Practice for the Welfare of Equines at Events

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Adapted by



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Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses and Ponies at Shows or Events

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1 Preface

- 1.1 In this code of practice 'horse/pony' refers to all equines and should, where the context allows, be taken to mean 'horse or horses, pony or ponies, donkeys or other equidae'.

2 General Conditions

- 2.1 This guidance has been developed by The British Horse Society (BHS) who have advised The Showing Council (TSC) in developing bespoke guidance for competitors/members/exhibitors competing in Member Body classes.
- 2.2 These guidelines have been produced to provide advice and support to members, competitors, show organisers, stewards, judges, volunteer assistants and spectators.
- 2.3 Under the Animal Welfare Act (2006), the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 and Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, (hereafter referred to as *The Welfare Acts*) every horse owner or those responsible for a horse have a duty of care to ensure the animal's well-being. Thus, causing suffering and ill treatment are no longer the only grounds for prosecution under animal welfare law. It is now an offence to fail to take adequate steps to ensure a horse's welfare, even if the animal is not yet at the point of suffering.
- 2.4 At all stages during the preparation and training of show horses, welfare must be absolutely paramount. This includes, but is not limited to, good horse management, training methods, farriery, use and fitting of tack and transportation.
- 2.5 Horses and competitors must be fit, competent and in good health and condition before they are allowed to compete. This encompasses medication use, surgical procedures that compromises welfare or safety and the use of aids. All Member Bodies are advised to have an anti-doping policy.

3 Health and Hygiene

- 3.1 The spread of equine disease is a perpetual risk when attending shows. Horse owners should act responsibly and not attend a show if there is a disease outbreak at their yard, even if the horse taken to the show does not appear ill. This is because some diseases have an incubation period of 14 days. For more information and guidance, please refer to the extensive information available on the BHS website and British Equestrian website.

www.bhs.org.uk

www.britishequestrian.org.uk

British Equestrian - Equine Infectious Disease Advisory Group: [Advice Notes for Member Bodies and Organisers of Equine Gatherings](#)

- 3.2 As a minimum, we advise keeping up to date with equine influenza and tetanus vaccines. Check what the specific vaccination requirements are with the event organisers or relevant governing body. If your horse doesn't meet these requirements, you are unlikely to be allowed to attend and may be asked to leave the showground. Remember to check the vaccination rules of the venue if you are hiring equestrian facilities. Shows reserve the right to conduct spot-checks to check compliance with vaccination regulations set by the show organiser.
- 3.3 To prevent the spread of disease, horses should not share water buckets or be allowed to drink from shared troughs. Exhibitors are strongly encouraged to provide their own feed and water equipment.
- 3.4 Competitors must be mindful of an increased disease risk when stabling horses away from home. Best practice would be to remove any pre-existing bedding.

4 Transport

- 4.1 Competitors must be aware of The Welfare of Animals During Transport Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005. You must have the necessary Transport Authorisation (and associated Certificate of Competence for horses) if you transport animals as part of an economic activity (a business or trade), for a distance over 65km.

You will need a:

- type 1 transporter authorisation for journeys over 65km and up to 8 hours
- type 2 transporter authorisation for journeys over 8 hours

You will need to contact APHA's Welfare in Transport team for an application pack:

APHA Website: www.gov.uk/guidance/contact-apha

Contact email for Welfare In Transport Team: WIT@apha.gov.uk

- 4.2 Economic activity is not defined in the regulations but would include anyone transporting horses for hire or reward or in the course of business or trade. This

would therefore include those paid to transport horses to a show, and professional riders as this is part of a business.

- 4.3 General animal welfare provisions apply on **all** journeys. The horse must travel with its passport, be fit to travel, provided with feed, water and rest stops as needed. The vehicle and loading/unloading facilities must be safe and designed to avoid injury and those handling the horse must be competent and not cause the animal fear or distress.
- 4.4 In adverse weather conditions, i.e., very hot temperatures or very cold temperature, those travelling horses must give consideration as to what time of day to travel horses and to minimise travel when temperatures are excessively high or excessively low.

5 Equine Identification

- 5.1 Horses being transported to a show must be accompanied by their up-to-date passport in accordance with Equine Identification regulations.

6 Welfare of Horses

6.1 Responsibilities of Owners/Keepers/Competitors

Overall responsibility for the horse lies with the individual who has charge of the horse on the day of the show. All those responsible for horses have a duty of care to take reasonable steps in all circumstances to meet the welfare needs to the extent required by good practice in terms of:

- need for a suitable environment
- need for a suitable diet
- need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- need to be housed with, or apart, from other animals
- need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

6.2 Welfare Considerations

6.2.1 Sensory Whiskers

Sensory hairs are the hard hairs located on the horse's muzzle and around the eyes, also known as 'whiskers' that are used for sensation. It is recommended that horses should not have whiskers trimmed or removed (other than for veterinary purposes or with a vet's certificate). Mares and Foals should present with no evidence of whiskers or sensory hairs removed. At some shows, this is a mandatory condition of entry for all equines, so please check individual show ruling.

6.2.2 Blood

On rare occasions a horse may injure itself traveling, being worked in or competing, or blood may be noticed from the mouth or nostrils or other parts of the horse's body. In these circumstances the competitor should not compete or

cease competing and get their horse checked as soon as possible once blood has been noticed. The horse should be treated and where necessary the person responsible for the horse should seek veterinary advice and attention to ensure the animal can travel home or continue to compete in further classes on the day.

6.2.3 Obesity

Obesity in horses and ponies must be avoided and all horses exhibited should be fit for purpose for the event or class they are competing in. Having a horse which is obese is extremely detrimental to its welfare and horses carrying too much fat are at a significantly increased risk of developing serious health and welfare issues such as:

- Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS)
- Laminitis
- Arthritis
- Increase stress on the heart and lungs
- Increased risk of developmental orthopaedic (bone and joint) problems in young and growing horses
- More strain on feet, joint and limbs
- Less efficient cooling of body temperatures

Members of the Showing Council are committed to working with The Horse Trust Body Condition Awards and promoting the Equine Weight Forum Statement and Actions including education by body scoring horses and ponies at events.

6.3 Welfare of the horse while not competing

- 6.3.1 No horse should be left unattended unless they are in a stable, horsebox/trailer and, known to behave sensibly when ordinarily left in such a situation.
- 6.3.2 For safety reasons horses should not be left unattended tied to a horsebox/trailer.
- 6.3.4 The weather conditions will affect the welfare requirements of the horse. Those responsible for horses should make the necessary adjustments to safeguard welfare in adverse weather conditions. For example, limiting the horse's time in direct sunlight in very high temperatures and using rugs in very cold temperatures.
- 6.3.5 During wet weather, waterproof sheets can be worn while warming the horse up and kept over the horse's hindquarters until they enter the class. At the discretion of the judge, grooms may enter the ring to provide a waterproof sheet in inclement weather.
- 6.3.6 During hot weather, horseboxes and trailers can get very hot. If the horse is kept in the horsebox/trailer ensure any windows and roof vents are left open and the ramps are left down to maximise air flow.
- 6.3.7 No horse should be ridden or lunged for an extended period without sufficient breaks for rest, watering and feeding. Children or those less experienced should

be supervised by a responsible adult to ensure that the horse receives adequate rest time.

6.4 Stabling

6.4.1 It is the responsibility of the person caring for the horse to ensure overnight provisions and stabling – in loose boxes where they have freedom of movement and availability of water - are in place on arrival at a show to avoid any horse being kept overnight on a trailer/horsebox. Pull out stables on lorries, temporary pens, corrals etc are not permitted.

6.5 Age and Gender of Horses

6.5.1 Horses under four years of age should not be ridden on the showground at any Show.

6.5.2 Where stallions are being exhibited, a stallion disc must be worn on the bridle and the rider/handler must be the correct age to compete or strip the horse in the ring and or lunge in accordance with the current and relevant Member Body Rule and Handbooks.

6.5.3 Pregnant mares are not permitted to compete under saddle without the prior agreement of a veterinary surgeon. No mare should be ridden under any circumstances after six months of gestation.

6.5.4 Mares with a living foal at foot, born during the current year may not be shown in ridden classes.

6.6 Control of Horses

6.6.1 Young and/or inexperienced horses require quiet, confident handling and should be appropriately handled.

6.6.2 Stallions and colts should be handled and ridden by competent people only. The temperament of the stallion must be taken into consideration, and he should not be taken to a showground if he is likely to be a danger to anyone present. When being led, stallions must be led from a bit with reins or with a lead rein. If it is the opinion of the relevant Member Body that the stallion may cause an accident to any person or horse at the showground, the stallion will be disqualified and asked to leave the showground.

7 Conduct and Responsibilities

7.1 Conduct and Responsibilities of Competitors

7.1.1 Competitors must consider the Health and Safety of other competitors, spectators and those working or assisting at the show.

- 7.1.2 It is necessary for all exhibitors to carry Public Liability Insurance for an adequate indemnity to protect against their negligence including any injury caused by their animals or property.
- 7.1.3 When riding outside of the warm-up arena and show arena, competitors should remain in walk or trot. Where available, horses/ponies must be ridden in designated 'horse walks'; grooms and spectators must use the designated pedestrian walkway.
- 7.1.4 No competitor should behave in an inappropriate manner to any horse, judge, event staff, members of the public or other competitors.
- 7.1.5 Under the Welfare Acts the parents/guardians of those under 16-years-old are responsible for the welfare of their children's horses/ponies.

7.2 *Conduct and Responsibilities of Competitors in the Warm-up Arena*

- 7.2.1 Riders and handlers should adhere to the rules of working in an arena while warming up, for example passing left-hand to left-hand.
- 7.2.2 Riders and handlers should recognise potential problems and keep a good distance from any individual having difficulties with their horse.
- 7.2.3 When jumping, in either the warm-up and show arenas no horse should jump a fence in the wrong direction.
- 7.2.4 Any horse that falls in the warm-up arena should only compete after the agreement of a veterinary surgeon.

7.3 *Conduct and Responsibilities of Competitors in the Show Ring*

- 7.3.1 Every competitor should behave in a safe and respectable manner at all times.
- 7.3.2 Competitors should follow instructions from the Show Steward and Judge.
- 7.3.3 The amount of work the horse undertakes should be in accordance with its age, experience, and fitness. All riders should be a suitable size for their horse whether in the ring, or working in. Riders working in ponies for other competitors or children must also be a suitable size for the pony and suitably mounted.
- 7.3.4 No one under the age of 12 years of age may enter the ring to groom, strip or handle the pony/horse. Those entering the ring must be suitably dressed

7.4 *Conduct and Responsibilities of Spectators with regards to Horse Welfare*

- 7.4.1 All children must be fully supervised.
- 7.4.2 If dogs are allowed on the showground, they must be kept on a lead, away from horses and appropriately controlled.

7.4.3 Spectators should not run, shout or cause excessive noise around the horses or arenas.

7.5 Use of the Whip

7.5.1 A rider/handler may carry a whip for safety and guidance purposes and limited to the backhand position only. When lunging, a lunge whip must only be used for safety and guidance purposes.

7.5.2 Legal action could be taken under the Welfare Acts should whip misuse occur.

7.6 Use of Spurs

7.6.1 Spurs may only be worn for safety and guidance purposes if permitted within the rules of the class – this includes the prior working in period.

7.6.2 Legal action could be taken under the Welfare Acts should spurs misuse occur.

7.7 Use of Tack and Equipment

7.7.1 Tack should always be fitted and used in a way that protects and safeguards welfare and safety of both horse and rider/handler. This applies at all times whilst on the event venue.

7.7.2 Legal Action could be taken under the Welfare Acts should tack misuse occur.

8 Provisions for Veterinary Treatment

8.1 The relevant Member Body carries out a risk assessment with specific regard to the provision of veterinary care.

8.2 At some events a veterinary surgeon may not actually be in attendance, the show organiser should ensure that a veterinary surgeon is available 'on-call' and within a reasonable driving time (suggested 20-30 minutes maximum).

Most Championship Shows have:

- Emergency lines of communication.
- Ensure proper access to the site and the ability to bring in equipment directly to the patient as efficiently as possible.
- Facilities available for dealing with simple injuries, for example a clean stable or other covered well-lit area and availability of clean water.
- Have ambulance for horses/ponies to be transported to a referral facility if necessary and where and how euthanasia is to be carried out if necessary.

8.3 Under the provisions of the Welfare Acts there is a degree of joint responsibility with organisers, but the owner or keeper of a horse/pony has prime responsibility for its welfare. It follows that the owner or keeper of a horse/pony:

- Should be clearly identified on the entry form.
- Should provide details of how they may be easily contacted in an emergency on the day of the event and if being stabled overnight.
- Should provide information on who has responsibility for making decisions about that horse/pony with regard to provision of emergency treatment, removal to a surgical facility and euthanasia.

8.4 It is recommended that Member Bodies should provide appropriate farriery provisions.

This policy has been adopted and is supported by the following organisations:



The ASAO