



Code of Practice for the
Welfare of Equines
Section 3 - Behaviour







Behaviour

Its need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns

3.1 This section offers guidance on your equine's behaviour.

Exercise

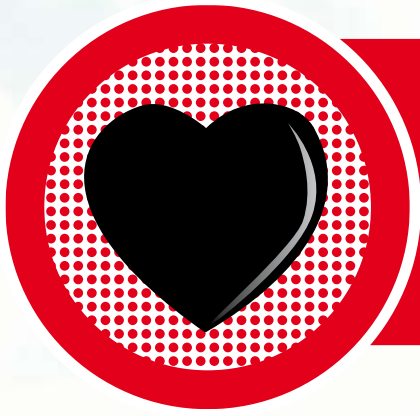
3.2 Horses and ponies require adequate exercise, or freedom to exercise, and this will require time and effort from the horse owner or keeper. Horses that are continuously stabled should be either exercised (ridden or in hand) or be given space in which to exercise themselves each day, unless under veterinary advice to do otherwise.

3.3 Working equines should be given an exercise ratio of 1 hour in 6 to be able to express normal behaviour.

Training

3.4 Horses require calm, consistent and sympathetic handling by competent people. Horses respond best to a firm but gentle approach and to rewards for correct responses.

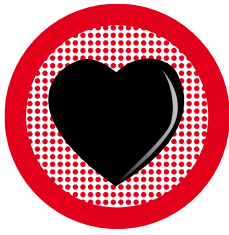




**Code of Practice for the
Welfare of Equines
Section 4 - Company**







Company

Any need it has to be housed with, or apart from, other animals

4.1 This section offers guidance on providing your equine with suitable company.

Socialisation

- 4.2** Being gregarious animals horses prefer to live in social groups. Ideally they should be socialised with members of their own species but, where this is not possible, other animals may be used to provide company. They also enjoy human company so, if kept on their own, they require more frequent human contact and supervision. Donkeys have particular socialisation needs and can, for example, become ill if separated from a companion.
- 4.3** Horses should always be treated as individuals even when kept in large groups. When forming new groups care should be taken to avoid fighting and stress, particularly if they are to be mixed together. This risk can be reduced by increasing the space allowance or by penning the new animal close to the existing group for a short period and or removing back shoes of all animals during the introduction period. Separation of incompatible animals is particularly important in this system; horses should not be mixed in fields or communal barns if any one individual is aggressive. Incompatible individuals, such as entire males (colts, stallions) and “rigs” (a stallion with undescended testicles or a horse which has been incompletely castrated) should be separated. In communal barns mares heavily in foal or with foal at foot should also be separated from other horses. When living in groups, horses always develop a pecking order, so it is important to be aware of bullying and it is important that the correct amount of feed and water is provided for all the horses in the group. Care needs to be taken to ensure that those lower down the pecking order are getting the feed and water they require.
- 4.4** As a general rule the more horses kept, the more time, effort and resources are required to safeguard the welfare of the horses. The size of the group is also important. Individuals in larger groups are likely to encounter more competition for food and water, shelter and social position.



Code of Practice for the
Welfare of Equines
Section 5 - Health & Welfare







Health & Welfare

Its need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease

5.1 This section offers guidance on the health and welfare of your equine.

Discipline and restraint

5.2 It is an offence to cause an animal unnecessary suffering therefore any discipline should be appropriate, timely, reasonable and proportionate. Similarly any restraint method used to assist normal management or treatment of the horse should be the most mild and effective method available and should be applied by a competent person only for the minimum period necessary. Sedatives must only be used under veterinary advice. Round-pens and electrified fence areas should not be used to keep horses in for long periods of time and should not be used for disciplinary purposes.

Illness

5.3 Everyone responsible for the supervision of horses should be able to recognise signs of ill health and have a basic knowledge of equine first aid. It is also important that owners and keepers have access to a veterinary surgeon to diagnose or treat any illness, injury or disease and have their contact details easily available, including out of hours details. Horse passports should be easily accessible; otherwise some treatments may not be available.

5.4 Owners and keepers of horses should be able to recognise the normal behaviour of their horses and recognise the signs that indicate poor health. These include:

- change in appetite (for food and water);
- change in droppings;
- change in demeanour or behaviour;
- losing body and coat condition; and
- any signs of pain or the presence of any injury or lameness.



- 5.5** When a horse becomes unwell, the cause of this deterioration should be identified and immediate remedial action taken. Veterinary advice should be obtained if the horse appears to be ill or in pain and the cause is not clear or if initial first aid treatment is not effective. In the case of foot problems, advice should be obtained from a registered farrier or veterinary surgeon. Advice from the veterinary surgeon or farrier should be followed diligently.
- 5.6** Veterinary advice should be sought immediately if the horse is suffering from severe lameness, is recumbent, has signs of acute pain, respiratory distress, large open wounds or deep puncture wounds.

Routine health care

- 5.7** A parasite control programme should be put in place following consultation with a veterinary surgeon or other suitably qualified person; this may include the use of wormers, and appropriate faecal worm egg counts. Careful pasture management including the rotation of grazing and dung collection is an important part of an effective parasite control programme.
- 5.8** Where groups of horses are kept together, worming programmes are most effective if all horses are treated simultaneously with the same product (or at the very least different products with the same active ingredient).
- 5.9** There should be adequate control of infectious and contagious disease by a programme agreed with a veterinary surgeon, which will include appropriate hygiene and isolation procedures and vaccination.
- 5.10** Teeth should be inspected by a veterinary surgeon or qualified equine dental technician at least once a year, and rasped or otherwise treated if necessary. Horses with worn or abnormal teeth are unable to chew their food properly which leads to poor digestion. Owners and keepers should look out for signs of this problem, such as: half-chewed food dropping out of the mouth; poor condition and lack of energy; and abnormal mouth movements when ridden.



- 5.11** Every horse owner and keeper should have some understanding of the care of a horse's feet, which grow continuously and the need to treat lameness promptly and effectively. Feet should be trimmed by a competent person and attention should be paid to their growth and balance. A horse should not be expected to work at a level above that which the hooves are capable of, whether shod or unshod. In the main, horses ridden or driven on roads or hard, rough surfaces will need to be regularly shod by a registered farrier. However, if horses are used unshod they will need to be carefully managed, and receive regular hoof care which ensures their use on difficult surfaces does not cause them to become sore. The Farriers Registration Act 1975 requires anyone shoeing horses to register each year with the Farriers Registration Council. This includes those people who only shoe their own horses. Loose shoes and those with risen clenches should receive prompt attention from a farrier to prevent possible injury. Hooves should be trimmed or re-shod as advised by the farrier, which should usually be every 4-8 weeks.





- 5.12** Flies can cause a great deal of irritation to horses, particularly during the summer, and can introduce infection to wounds so an appropriate treatment from a veterinary surgeon should be used. Midges can also be a source of irritation during the spring and summer and can cause sweet itch (an allergic skin condition). Consideration should be given to preventative fly and midge control through the use of fly repellents, fly rugs or masks and, for horses sensitive to fly or midge bites, stabling at dawn and dusk when flies and particularly midges are most active.



- 5.13** Working horses need an annual vet inspection to certify that they are fit for purpose. Special regard should be given to work-related health issues.

Saddlery and Harness

- 5.14** Saddlery and harness should be suitable for the purpose, being appropriate to the needs and abilities of both horse and rider. They should be correctly fitted, preferably by a qualified saddler and the fit should be checked when the animal changes condition. Equipment should be regularly cleaned and maintained in good order to ensure comfort, safety and effectiveness.



- 5.15** Working horses have special needs when it comes to a working harness. They should be designed and fitted only by a qualified person.



- 5.16** Boots and bandages: if used, these should be suitable for the purpose, correctly fitted to avoid discomfort or injury and only left on for the minimum time necessary.

Transporting Horses

- 5.17** The transportation of horses and ponies should always be as safe and stress free as possible and in accordance with current rules and regulations.

Care of Older or Ill Horses

- 5.18** It may be necessary, in the event of incurable illness, old age or permanent unsoundness or, more suddenly, in the event of an accident, to arrange the humane destruction of a horse. The horse's welfare must always come first. Therefore, in the interests of the horse, owners should give the issue their full consideration well before the time comes to make a decision to prevent the horse suffering unnecessary pain and distress.



- 5.19** Where, in the opinion of a veterinary surgeon, a horse is significantly suffering, has not responded to treatment for a serious injury or condition involving significant pain, has a disease or injury from which there is no prospect of recovery and for which no treatment is available, or where a horse is in such a condition that it would be inhumane to keep it alive, the animal should be humanely destroyed without delay by veterinary surgeon.
- 5.20** In a non-emergency situation, where a horse is permanently unsound or has a recurring or permanent and steadily worsening condition, a rational decision should be made with due regard for the horse's future and welfare.
- 5.21** As horses become older their needs may become greater, they may well require increased supervision and additional veterinary care. When a horse reaches the end of its active working life, or is very elderly, consideration should be given to whether the horse can be provided with a good quality of life in retirement. Owners have a responsibility to ensure that they or whoever is entrusted with the care of such an animal is fully aware of the needs of that animal otherwise consideration should be given as to whether it would be kinder to have the horse painlessly destroyed.

Appendix 1

Code of Practice for the Welfare of Equines Tethering







A Suitability of the Animal

1. Not all animals are suitable for tethering.
2. Young animals; horses under two years old should not be tethered.
3. Pregnant animals should not be tethered in the last third of pregnancy.
4. Nursing mothers should not be tethered.
5. Mares should not be tethered near stallions.
6. The tethering of stallions should be undertaken only with great care and as a temporary measure.
7. Sick animals should not be tethered.
8. Old and infirm (disabled as opposed to injured or sick) animals should not be tethered.
9. Tethered animals should not be tethered around free-roaming animals.

B Site (the area to which the tethered animal has access)

1. The site should be reasonably level, have good grass cover, and be free of any objects, natural or man made, which could ensnare the tether.
2. The site should not allow the horse access to a public highway.
3. A site in which a high proportion of the herbage consists of weeds is not suitable.
4. The site should not be waterlogged.
5. The site should not be crossed by any public right of way.
6. The site should not have anything on it, which might injure an animal.
7. The site should not be used without the written permission of the landowner. Written permission should include a requirement to abide by this Code.
8. An adequate area for tethering should allow access by any part of the horse's body and with an extra 4 metres between the hind quarters of one horse and another.



C Tethering Equipment

1. Either a well-fitting leather head collar, or a broad leather neck strap must be used. These should be fitted with a 360° swivel device where the chain is attached.
2. The chain should be approximately 20ft in length, and must be strong enough to prevent breakage, but light enough to prevent pressure sores from the tethering equipment. Rope or nylon should not be used.
3. The ground stake must not protrude above ground level, and must be fitted with a 360° swivel.

D Food and water

1. In many cases the site will provide adequate food in the form of grass; where this is the case the tether site should be changed at least once daily to ensure the quality of the pasture.
2. If the grass is not sufficient for the animal's need, sufficient forage food should be available throughout each day.
3. Water should be made available on a frequent and regular basis throughout the day in a spill-proof container.
4. Containers for concentrate food should be kept in a clean and safe condition.

E Shelter

1. Animals should not be exposed to the full heat of the sun, to heavy rain, snow or hail, or to strong winds for other than very short periods. In extremes of weather shelter should be provided.
2. Shelter should, at a minimum, provide shade from the sun and from severe wind. In prolonged rain, a well drained area must be available.

F Exercise

1. Animals must be given freedom to exercise off the tether for a reasonable period at least once a day.



G Supervision

1. Tethered animals require a high level of supervision, and should be inspected no less frequently than six hourly intervals during normal waking hours.
2. Provision should be made to deal with situations where extremes of weather or other circumstances occur.

H Identification

1. All tethered animals should be marked in such a way as to be permanently identifiable, and from this identification the keeper or owner should be able to be readily contacted.
2. This could be achieved by use of a freeze-brand or microchip registered with a 24-hour access database.
3. Alternatively the animal could have some form of identification attached to the head collar or neck strap giving full details of the keeper or owner.
4. It will be a requirement that all animals born after 1st July 2009 will have to be microchipped. All details will appear on the National Equine Database.

I Other requirements

1. They may need protection from ill-intentioned persons.



Appendix 2

Code of Practice for the Welfare of Equines

The Law





The Animal Welfare Act 2006

The following sections of the Act are referred to in the Code and are set out here for ease of reference:

The boxes below contain extracts from the relevant sections of the Act.

The box shaded grey summarises the relevant offences and penalties in the Act.

Section 3 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 states:

- (1) In this Act, references to a person responsible for an animal are to a person responsible for an animal whether on a permanent or temporary basis.
- (2) In this Act, references to being responsible for an animal include being in charge of it.
- (3) For the purpose of this Act, a person who owns an animal shall always be regarded as being a person who is responsible for it.
- (4) For the purpose of this Act, a person shall be treated as responsible for any animal for which a person under the age of 16 years of whom he has actual care and control is responsible.

Section 4 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 states:

- (1) A person commits an offence if:
 - (a) an act of his, or a failure of his to act, causes an animal to suffer,
 - (b) he knew, or ought reasonably to have known, that the act, or failure to act, would have that effect or be likely to do so
 - (c) the animal is a protected animal, and
 - (d) the suffering is unnecessary
- (2) A person commits an offence if:
 - (a) he is responsible for an animal
 - (b) an act, or failure to act, of another person causes the animal to suffer,
 - (c) he permitted that to happen or failed to take such steps (whether by way of supervising the other person or otherwise) as were reasonable in all the circumstances to prevent that happening, and
 - (d) the suffering is unnecessary



Section 9 of the Act states:

- (1) A person commits an offence if he does not take such steps as are reasonable in all the circumstances to ensure that the needs of an animal for which he is responsible are met to the extent required by good practice.
- (2) For the purposes of this Act, an animal's needs shall be taken to include:
 - (a) its need for a suitable environment
 - (b) its need for a suitable diet
 - (c) its need to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
 - (d) any need it has to be housed with, or apart from, other animals
 - (e) its need to be protected from suffering, injury and disease.
- (3) The circumstances to which it is relevant to have regard when applying subsection (1) include, in particular:
 - (a) any lawful purpose for which the animal is kept, and
 - (b) any lawful activity undertaken in relation to the animal.
- (4) Nothing in this section applies to the destruction of an animal in an appropriate and humane manner.

Section 14 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 provides:

Codes of Practice

- (3) A person's failure to comply with a provision of a Code of Practice issued under this section shall not of itself render him liable to proceedings of any kind.
- (4) In any proceedings against a person for an offence under this Act or an offence under regulations under section 12 or 13:
 - (a) a failure to comply with a relevant provision of a Code of Practice issued under this section may be relied upon as tending to establish liability, and
 - (b) compliance with a relevant provision of such a Code of Practice may be relied upon as tending to negative liability.



Offences and Penalties

1. A person who is convicted of an offence under section 4 of the Act may be imprisoned for a maximum period of 51 weeks* and/or fined up to £20,000. If they are convicted of an offence under section 9 (failing to ensure the animal's welfare) they can be imprisoned for the same maximum period and fined up to level 5 on the standard scale.
 2. Proceedings may be brought up to 3 years after the offence was committed. Prosecutions under the Act are brought by the local authority in the Magistrates Court.
- * The maximum period of imprisonment will be 51 weeks when section 281 (5) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 comes into force.

Other legislation affecting equines

As well as the Animal Welfare Act 2006 there are a number of other laws that affect the way you keep your equine. The ones most likely to affect the owner or keeper of an equine are summarised below.

Under the Weeds Act 1959 the Welsh Ministers can, if satisfied that specified weeds, including Common Ragwort, are growing upon any land, serve a notice requiring the occupier to take action to prevent the spread of those weeds. An unreasonable failure to comply with a notice is an offence.

The Farriers (Registration) Act 1975 states:

Under this Act it is an offence for an unregistered person to carry out an act of farriery. An act of farriery is described as “any work in connection with the preparation of treatment of the foot of a horse for the immediate reception of a shoe thereon, the fitting by nailing or otherwise of a shoe to the foot or the finishing off of such work to the foot”.



The Welfare of Animals in Transport (Wales) Order 2007 No. 1047 (W.105) (WATO) requires everyone transporting animals on any journey to ensure that:

- No one shall transport animals, or cause them to be transported, in a way likely to cause them injury or undue suffering
- Journey times are kept to a minimum
- The animals are fit to travel
- The vehicle and its loading and unloading facilities are designed, constructed and maintained to avoid injury and suffering to ensure the safety of the animals
- Water, feed and rest are given to the animals as needed and sufficient floor space and height is available in the transport
- Horses older than 8 months must wear halters during transport - unless they are unbroken horses
- If horses or ponies are transported on a multi-deck vehicle they must only be carried on the lowest deck, with no other animals above them. In this circumstance, the compartment height must be at least 75cm higher than the height of the withers of the highest animal
- Horses and ponies must be transported in individual stalls when the vehicle is on a RO-RO vessel, with the exception that a mare may travel with her foal.
- Unbroken horses and ponies must not be transported in groups of more than four animals
- Unbroken horses and ponies must not be transported for more than eight hours



Appendix 3

Sources of Information







Legislation

- Animal Welfare Act 2006
- Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations.
- The Welfare of Animals (Transport) (Wales) Order 2007
- The Weeds Act 1959
- The Farriers (Registration) Act 1975

Websites of relevant organisations

- www.bhscymru.co.uk
- www.worldhorsewelfare.org
- www.bhs.org.uk
- www.newc.co.uk
- www.pcuk.org
- www.bva.uk
- www.beva.org.uk
- www.wef.org.uk
- www.farrier-reg.gov.uk
- www.wales.gov.uk
- www.hsa.org.uk
- www.rspca.org.uk
- www.ragwort.jakobskruiskruid.com/
- www.t-c-m-rd.co.uk/invasive-weeds/ragwort/

Publications relevant to topics covered by Code

- British Horse Society Publications:
 - The Complete Horse & Pony Care
 - BHS Guide to Grassland management
 - The BHS Complete Manual of Stable Management
 - The BHS Veterinary Manual
 - The BHS First Horse Owner Pack
 - BHS Welfare leaflets cover a wide range of topics and can be downloaded via the BHS website at:
www.bhs.org.uk - follow the links to Welfare and then leaflets.



- Pony Club Publications:
 - Manual of Horsemanship
 - Keeping a Pony at Grass
- National Equine Welfare Council publications:
 - Equine Industry Welfare Guidelines Compendium
 - Code of Practice for Markets and Sales involved with the selling of Horses, Ponies and Donkeys
 - Code of Practice for the Tethering of Horses, Ponies and Donkeys
 - Code of Practice for Welfare Organisations involved in the keeping of Horses, Ponies and Donkeys
- British Equine Veterinary Association
 - Horse Care Guide

