

# **Equine 'In Safe Hands'™ Campaign**

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## **Equine 'In Safe Hands'™ Campaign**

A proposal by Sandra Murphy BSc Equine SpSc

For the purpose of this document the term 'horse includes horses, ponies, donkeys and their hybrids.

Since the horse was domesticated, human society has changed rapidly, however in evolutionary terms these changes have taken place in a very short period of time. The horse has many instincts and behaviours that are deeply entrenched and therefore because of our own evolutionary processes, in many human societies today, horses are not living in conditions which their evolutionary history have equipped them to survive in (Goodwin 1999).

Competition, leisure and working horses are often stabled individually, which although may reduce the risk of horses injuring each other, this form of isolation is detrimental to the gregarious nature of these herd animals. Stabling also reduces the amount of land required to keep them, which means that many more horses can be kept in a smaller facility. Stabling also makes it easier to control the horses' diet, to catch them and keep them clean. However, stabling horses coupled with associated restriction of foraging time have been linked to the expression of stereotypic behaviour in some individuals (McGreevy et al. 1995).

When we consider the reasons for people keeping horses these days and the way that they are managed, a great deal seems contrary to the behaviour which has ensured the horse's survival. Individual paddocks, stables and solitary training sessions restrict horses' freedom and ability to maintain social relationships. One of the main issues is that we do not take into consideration the horses psychological state, we expect them to allow our presence in areas which make them vulnerable to attack; we make them jump over objects that they can easily avoid, perform incredibly intricate gymnastic manoeuvres and to travel around the world in a small metal box, there is obviously huge scope for some miscommunication, added to this an inappropriate diet and the lack of adequate hydration can cause excitable or bad behaviour and lack of performance, all too often those horses that cannot adapt to the unnatural conditions we impose are sadly euthanized or sent for slaughter. However, by appreciating the adaptive significance of equine behaviour, sympathetic and effective management of the horse can be achieved.

Most people who own horses have their best interests at heart and they understand the care and management of their charges, however there are an increasing population of people who are now taking on horses who are not as broadly educated about equine care and management and therefore some horses are not receiving the care that they are entitled to and they end up with welfare issues. These welfare issues are escalated even further due to the down turn in the economic climate, individuals are cutting back on veterinary, feeding and stabling costs as horses can cost up to £100 a week to look after. However if every owner understood basic care and management techniques then maybe it would reduce costs for them and in turn reduce the number of welfare cases going into the centres.

### **Overbreeding and Overstocking**

One of the main reason for the abundance of horses taken into welfare centres is the 'overbreeding or overstocking' by breeders, dealers and the travelling community. Over production caused by indiscriminate breeding, produces poor quality, low value foals, which is the source of many welfare problems. There was a time where animal could command quite high prices, however over production has watered down the demand to the point of saturation. Prices for horses have dropped substantially and a pony can be bought for as little as £5 at some markets, meanwhile owners who find themselves in difficulty are finding it even harder to give their unwanted animals away. If these animals cannot be found decent homes, they can end up being exported out to the continent for the meat trade which is a very sad reality.

### **Anthropomorphism or Humanising Animals**

Another modern day issues arising in recent years is 'anthropomorphism' or humanising of the horse, the predisposition to attribute human traits, emotions, and intentions to non-human entities which is considered to be an instinctive tendency of human psychology. This is evident with the popularity of modern rugging techniques - there are situations where extra protection is necessary such as when a horse is 'clipped' of its natural winter coat, however just because we get cold in the winter and put on a jacket, it does not mean that the horse is cold and needs a jacket as they have their own built in heating system but because we

interfere with the horses' thermoregulation an increase of just 4 -5°C can have devastating effects on their physiology and can cause death (Brown, 2016).

Metabolic disorders are also becoming more challenging with the grazing of pasture high in non-structural carbohydrate content (eg, during spring or when pastures are stressed by drought or frost), consumption of other feeds rich in starch and sugars (grains, sweet feeds) and generally overfeeding horses which induces or worsens obesity. This mostly commonly results in an increase in instances of Equine Metabolic syndrome (EMS) (Geor, 2008).

Dietary management for EMS is critical, owners of affected horses often do not realise that they are 'killing their horses with kindness' unless they significantly restrict grazing of lush paddocks or eliminate feeding of highly digestible grain and sugars, which has been cited as one of the major causes of EMS predisposing horses to Laminitis (Geor 2008). If these issues are not addressed the instances of EMS and associated metabolic disorders will continue to rise. A recent study carried out in Sweden concluded that it is a serious animal welfare issue that diets associated with gastrointestinal disorders and abnormal and stereotypical behaviour are fed to horses today and it was suggested that there is an urgent need for diets that support the natural digestive function and behaviour of horses (Jansson and Lindberg, 2012). Individuals and organisations should therefore be made aware that some traditional methods of feeding horses may not benefitting horses and may well be contributing to the welfare of horses across the UK.

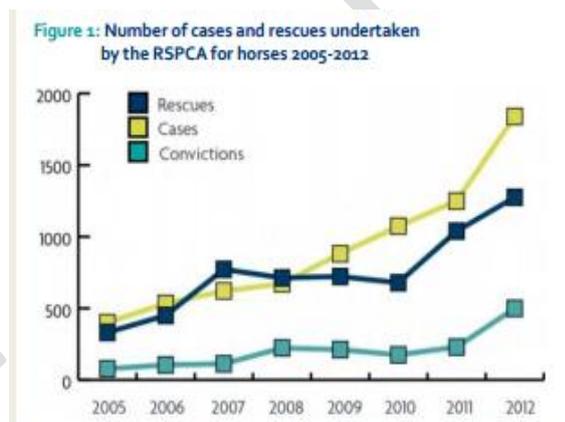
The National Equine Health survey (NEHS) collected data from 11,002 horses across the UK in May 2014. The survey found that 7.1% of horses had Laminitis, compared with 4.4% in 2013. Of this year's laminitis cases, 43% were recorded as first episodes and 57% as recurrent. This compares with 25% and 75% last year (National Equine Health Survey, 2014). The upward trend in these statistics is alarming, so if misconceptions and inertia in traditional management systems are not challenged, improvements are likely to be slow to emerge to the detriment of the horse.

According to the Farm Animal Welfare Council, the welfare of an animal includes its physical and mental state and it is considered that good animal welfare implies

both fitness and a sense of well-being, therefore any animal kept by man, must at least, be protected from unnecessary suffering (FAWC, 1979).

However, England and Wales are “In the Grip of a Horse Crisis” according to the National Equine Welfare Council whose report shows that the number of horses that equine charities are caring for and the number of welfare cases investigated have increased significantly over the past five years and continues to increase into 2013. (NEWC 2014)

The World Horse Welfare has seen a 43% rise in the number of horses it has taken into its centres since 2006; from 129 in 2006 rising to 185 in 2012. In the first quarter of 2013 the organisation took in 40 % more horses than in the equivalent period the previous year. In 2012 Blue Cross admitted 157 horses and the RSPCA admitted 760 horses, the highest number in any year to date. Despite operating close to capacity with 1300 horses in its care, Redwings Horse Sanctuary took in 161 horses in 2012 and has already admitted more than 100 since the start of 2013 (NEWC 2014).



The Animal Welfare Act 2006 states that every animal should be entitled to the five freedoms which are currently expressed as:

#### The Five Freedoms

- 1) Freedom from hunger or thirst by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
- 2) Freedom from discomfort by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
- 3) Freedom from pain, injury or disease by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- 4) Freedom to express (most) normal behaviour by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
- 5) Freedom from fear and distress by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering

The National Equine Welfare Council has published the Equine Industry Welfare Guidelines Compendium for Horses, Ponies and Donkeys and it give full details of the minimum standard of care and management to which all horses are entitled to and all legislation relevant to the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

Therefore the aim of this proposal is to provide a method to implement the standardisation of the care and management of the domesticated horse used for competition, leisure, work or companion animal within the UK and Northern Ireland. This proposal will set out the aims of the Equine 'In Safe Hand' Campaign and will set out how it will be implemented and how it will be rolled out nationwide so that a basic level of care and management of the horse can be achieved and enforced by the provisions of Animal Welfare Act 2006

#### **Animal Welfare Act 2006**

#### **CHAPTER 45**

**An Act to make provision about animal welfare; and for connected purposes.**

**[8th November 2006]**

#### **Paragraph 9 Duty of person responsible for animal to ensure welfare**

##### **Section (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.**

##### **Section (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 be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns,**
- (d) any need it has to be housed with, or apart from, other animals, and**
- (e) its need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.**

##### **Section (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.**

##### **Section (4)**

**Nothing in this section applies to the destruction of an animal in an appropriate and humane manner.**

# The Equine 'In Safe Hands' Campaign

## Aims and Objectives

The aim of the Equine 'In Safe Hands' Campaign is:

*1) To enable a standardisation of care and management of domesticated horses, ponies and donkeys involved in competition, leisure, work or as a companion animal. All persons working with, owning, training, breeding, selling, transferring or buying horses must be in possession of a BHS Approved Equine 'In Safe Hands' Certificate. This certificate will show that the individual or organisation concerned has covered the relevant requirements necessary to comply with the Animal Welfare Act 2006.*

### 1) The Training Course Manual

1. (1) The training course manual, an amended version of 'The Equine Industry Welfare Guidelines Compendium for Horses, Ponies and Donkeys' will be provided either online as a study guide or as a book that can be purchased from the NEWC/BHS to enable the reader to have the standardised information regarding equine care and management, though, it is not compulsory to purchase the training course manual all the questions in the certification questionnaire will relate to the training manual, however it will be *compulsory* to sit the certification questionnaire.

#### Suggestion:

The NEWC can charge a fee for administration of the training manual and to raise revenue for the welfare charities.

1. (2) Most people who look after horses correctly, offer the '5 freedoms' and comply with the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 should not feel intimidated by the certification questionnaire, however those people who would like to take on the responsibility of owning, breeding, training horses and do not have the necessary level of experience will have to cover the training course manual to be able to sit the certification questionnaire.

1. (3) The training course manual will encompass the strategy of the Equine Industry Welfare Guidelines Compendium for Horses, Ponies and Donkeys (Third Edition) and the BHS Horse Care and Management scheme to include topics such as:

- a) Safe Handling Techniques
- a) Basic anatomy, body condition score
- b) Nutrition and Dietary Management
- c) Health, disease worming and vaccinations
- d) Grooming, Dental and Hoof care
- e) Stabling, Bedding and Pasture Management
- f) Horse Psychology and Behaviour
- g) Care of Tack and Equipment
- h) Seasonal Management
- i) Road Safety and Travelling Horses

1. (4) Each section of the training course manual will explain in detail, the basic provisions necessary to fulfil the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

Suggestion:

To raise revenue for administration, the BHS can run optional day courses for individuals to get hands on experience and to cover all topics relating to the certification questionnaire. This could be their Essential Horse Knowledge Course, to encourage more uptake of this course.

1. (5) Once the individual has obtained a copy of the training course manual, they should take an appropriate period to study its content so that they gain adequate information to take the certification questionnaire. The training course manual will also be available for future reference should it be required.

*2) To educate individuals so that there can be a reduction in the number of cases presented to Equine Welfare Charities in an effort to reduce the increasing burden on their resources.*

## **2) The Certification Questionnaire**

**2. (1) It will be compulsory for EVERY person who works with, breeds, trains, owns, buys, sells, transfers or travels horses to sit the certification questionnaire to be able to carry out activities with horses, ponies and donkeys with effect from \_\_\_\_\_(date).**

2. (2) The certification questionnaire will have two levels: Basic – Individuals, who work with, own, buy, sell, transfer, travel and carry out activities on a leisure basis with less than 3 horses (Individual certification).

2. (3) Advanced – Individuals and organisations, who work with, own, buy, sell, travel and transfer horses on a commercial basis with more than 3 horses (Commercial certification) such as:

- a) Livery Yard
- b) Riding Schools
- c) Competition Yards
- d) Dealers
- e) Polo Yards
- f) Hunt Yards
- g) Equine Professionals
- h) Veterinary Centres and Hospitals
- i) Welfare and rehabilitation centres
- j) Equine Sales and Markets

2. (4) The certification questionnaire will comprise of a mixture of multiple choice questions, diagrams, tick boxes and written answers (Compiled by the BHS, NEWC, Redwings etc.) to ensure that the information within the training course manual or a prior understanding/experience of care and management can be monitored and adjudicated against a minimum standard. No one will be exempt even if the individual has carried out

### Suggestion:

The BHS can charge £10.00 per individual exam attempt. An individual can have as many attempts as required to pass. However, the charge for an organisation will be £100 per exam attempt.

activities with horses for an inordinate length of time.

2. (5) Sitting the certification questionnaire will ensure that any new methods currently employed to prevent welfare issues and any new legislation can be conveyed to these individual so that everyone has the same information across the equine industry.

*3) To ensure that owners, breeders, trainers, managers and equine professionals recognise the importance of the 'In Safe Hands' certification so that it becomes increasingly difficult to buy, sell or transfer equines without the individual understanding the horses' basic care and management needs.*

### **3. Implementation**

3. (1) It is always difficult to implement measures that promote change; however these measures should be put in place to reduce the number of welfare cases and to conserve the integrity of the horse. The Equine 'In Safe Hands' certification should commence in 2017 and be rolled out within 12 months, it should then be mandatory by 2018 and enforced by the Passport Issuing authority and Breed societies.

#### Suggestion:

It is the personal responsibility of the individual to take the certification questionnaire in his or her own right and not as part of an organisation, however organisations should also recognise the staff that have taken exam and encourage the ones who have not, to do so.

3. (2) All BHS and Pony Club registered centres should be taking an active role in this campaign making it compulsory for all riders (16 and over or parents of children 15 and under) to be in possession of Equine 'In Safe Hands' certificate **if** they already own or wish to own a pony in the future.

3. (3) It is the responsibility of all owners, breeders, trainers, managers and equine professionals to recognise the importance of basic care and management of horses and therefore it is in their interest to enforce the Equine 'In Safe Hands'

certification process within their particular activity. Each individual has a 'duty of care' for the animals that they own or work with, and it is their personal responsibility to have a valid 'Equine In Safe Hands' Certificate when working in an organisation with equine activities, however the owner or manager of an organisation must take a higher level of care and management (Level 2). This level is required for these organisations as they are also responsible for their staff.

3. (4) The examination process will be administered by the BHS or the Pony Club and its registered centres will be pivotal to the implementation of the Equine 'in Safe Hands' campaign. Individuals will be able to contact any BHS/PC approved centre to arrange to take a certification questionnaire in confidence. The BHS approved centre manager or PC District Commissioner will be responsible for issue a blank certification questionnaire on production of photographic ID, i.e. Driving License, Passport or ID Card. The certification questionnaire can then be completed by the individual at the centre. Each certification questionnaire has a unique reference number printed on it and can be traced to a specific issuing centre.

3. (5) The Adjudication and Certification process will commence once the individual has completed the certification questionnaire. It is handed back to the Centre Manager and they will forward it along with the collected fee to the BHS for adjudication. A panel of adjudicators will mark the certification questionnaire and if the individual has achieved the required level, the BHS will issue a certificate directly by post.

3. (6) If an individual fails to achieve the required level, the BHS will inform the individual by post and request that the questionnaire is retaken, however there must be at least (two) 2 weeks between a failed attempt and a retake. No explanation will follow for failed attempts so that the individual has to acquire all the relevant knowledge to enable to pass at the appropriate level.

3. (7) An individual or organisation can retake the certification questionnaire as many times as necessary to gain their certification on payment of the correct fee.

#### **4 Security**

4. (1) All individuals will have to produce a picture form of ID when collecting the certification questionnaire so that a positive identification of the individual can be made. The centre manager have the right to refuse to provide a certification questionnaire if the identification of the individual cannot be verified.

4. (2) The certification questionnaires must not be photocopied as each one will have its own unique reference number which allows identification of the centre where the exam was taken.

4. (3) All individuals must provide 2 passport sized photographs and correct fee to the centre manager before a certification questionnaire can be issued.

#### **5) Continuation Training and Day Courses**

5. (1) The BHS already provide 'The Essential Horse Knowledge Certificates' on completion of a training course which replaced 'The Horse Owners Certificates' during 2015. These new qualifications are held at two levels: Entry Level and Level One.

5. (2) They are suitable for learners of all ages. However, we recommend a minimum age of 12 years. You can enter at either level, although if you are new to horses or have limited background knowledge we recommend you start at Entry Level.

5. (3) The qualifications are specifically aimed at the first-time horse owner or carer, parents of horse owners, potential horse owners or anyone else interested in the care and welfare of horses and gives hands on experience.

5. (4) This further optional qualification will be assessed through a written assessment via exam papers produced directly by the BHS. On achievement of the qualification all certificates will be sent to the instructor, who will forward them on to candidates (BHS 2016).

## **6. Further Examinations and Qualifications**

6.(1) The BHS have a series of examinations that can be taken by individuals wishing to further their knowledge and experience with horses, therefore following on from the certification questionnaire, or the Essential Horse Knowledge Certificate, individuals can take the BHS Stage examinations. With an Equine 'In Safe Hands' Certificate, they would be able to apply to commence training and apply for examination via the BHS Training and Education route which consists of the following:

### **6. (2) BHS Horse Knowledge Care and Riding Stage 1**

The BHS Stage 1 is suitable for anyone aged 14 years and over who cares for and/or rides horses regularly. It is designed to give a good foundation of equine knowledge and a solid base on which to build an individual's riding skills.

### **6. (3) BHS Horse Knowledge Care and Riding Stage 2**

The BHS Stage 2 is suitable for those aged 16 years and over. The Horse Knowledge and Care section builds on the knowledge acquired at Stage 1 as well as including skills and knowledge required for the work environment and improving riding skills.

### **6. (4) BHS Horse Knowledge Care and Riding Stage 3**

The BHS Stage 3 is suitable for those aged 17 years and over. The Horse Knowledge and Care section builds on the knowledge and skills acquired at Stage 2. The riding is split into two sections and the skills and knowledge learned will enable the individual to progress to take a place as a professional within the industry.

6. (5) Other specialist courses can be taken through the BHS, see the website (<http://www.bhs.org.uk/education/exams-and-qualifications>) for more information.

## **7) Buying, Selling and Transferring Horses**

7. (1) As from 1 August 2009, it is an offence for a keeper with “primary care responsibilities” e.g. full livery yards, persons caring for horses under loan agreements, breeders, trainers and transporters, to keep a horse that has not been issued with a passport. Keepers will need to satisfy themselves that a horse has been correctly identified before accepting the animal into their care.

7. (2) Once an Equine ‘In Safe Hands’ certificate has been issued to an individual or organisation, it becomes a valuable document. If the individual wants to buy a horse then:

7. (3) The individual has the right to see a copy of the seller’s certificate and the seller has the right to see a copy of the buyer’s certificate to ensure that both parties have a basic understanding of the care and management of the equine/s involved.

## **8. Passport Issuing Authority**

8 (1) The owner has to have a valid passport for the horse by law according to the Horse Passport Regulations 2009.

8. (2) To apply for a passport, the owner has to present a copy of their certificate to the passport agencies or breed society before a new passport can be obtained. Passport agencies should therefore not allow any passport to be issued or a change in ownership or transfer to take place without the individual or organisation presenting a copy of their Equine ‘In Safe Hands’ certificate. This will ensure that all individuals concerned will have basic knowledge of care and management of equines.

8. (3) New passports will be have a section to state that the Equine ‘In Safe Hands’ certificate has been produced. Older passports will not carry this section, however on receipt of a passport to change ownership/transfer, this will be stamped on to show that the Equine ‘In Safe Hands’ certificate has been produced.

8. (4) If an owner cannot present the Equine 'In Safe Hands' certificate with their name on it when applying for a passport or for transfer of ownership then the passport agency/ breed association should hold onto the passport or refrain from issuing the passport until a copy of the Equine 'In Safe Hands' certificate can be produced.

8 (5) Transferring ownership of a horse also requires a copy of the owner Equine 'In Safe Hands' certificate before the passport can be annotated.

### **9. Auctions or Sales**

9. (1) If horses are to be sold at a public sale/auction, the seller's require an Equine 'In Safe Hands' certificate before any equine can be placed as a lot and allocated a lot number.

9. (2) If a horse is purchased from an auction, the new owner has to produce a copy of their Equine 'In Safe Hands' certificate before the auction house or sales room can release the animal to the new owner.

### **10. Breeding**

10. (1) Any person owning a stallion for breeding purposes must be in possession of an Equine 'In Safe Hands' certificate, which must be produced when issuing a covering certificate.

10. (2) Any person owning a mare for the purpose of breeding must be in possession of an Equine 'In Safe Hands Certificate' which must be produced to the Veterinary surgeon when issuing a should have their passports annotated with the owners

10. (3) Any person owning a weanling foal must be in possession of an Equine 'In Safe Hands' Certificate to be able to register the foal for a passport or to be presented for micro-chipping.

## **11. Shows and Judging**

11. (1) All show organisers/committee are required to hold a valid Advanced Equine 'In Safe Hands' certificate to be able to register a show with an affiliated organisation.

11. (2) All competitors competing at affiliated shows i.e. BE, BD, BS EGB, are required to provide their Equine 'In Safe Hands' Certificate number on all entry forms and it is the responsibility of the show secretary to enforce this condition.

11. (3) It is the responsibility of all show organisers to make it known on their schedules that a valid Equine 'In Safe Hands' Certificate number must accompany every entry.

11. (4) It is the responsibility of all judges who are registered with a breed society to inspire owners to show their equines within the acceptable body score limits and to not encourage equines to be overweight according to the BS Index.

11. (5) It is the responsibility of the show organisers to discourage horses being tied to horse boxes without adequate food and fresh water accessible and available.

## **12. Travelling Horses**

12. (1) Any person employing a commercial Equine transporter must be in possession of an Equine 'In Safe Hands' Certificate before any equine may travel.

12. (2) If travelling by air, a copy of an Equine 'In Safe Hands' Certificate for the horse/s must be produced before any equine may travel.

### Suggestion:

The 'Practical Guidelines on the watering of Equine Animals Transported by Road' (Anon, 2014) should form a mandatory part of the training manual.

### **13. Enforcement**

13. (1) These measures are very strict and must be taken seriously by the equine industry if the increase in welfare cases is to be kept under control.

13. (2) It will be the responsibility of all equine organisations and equine professionals to enforce these measures to ensure that the welfare of horses is protected so that the numbers of cases can be reduced over the next 5 years.

13. (3) It is the responsibility of The Passport Agency and the Breed Societies to enforce their part of these measures by ensuring that every individual/organisation presents a valid copy of the Equine 'In Safe Hands' certificate to be able to obtain, renew or transfer a passport for an equine.

### **Suggestions for amendment of the Training Course Manual**

#### 1) Nutrition

More emphasis should be placed on feeding a fibre based diet to horses, with new advances in feeding techniques it is possible to feed a horse a more natural diet that can prevent serious welfare issues occurring (Janssen and Lindberg 2012)

#### 2) Rugging

More emphasis should be placed on teaching the principals of Thermoregulation and how the use of rugs can effect the ability of a horse to cool down or to warm up (Brown 2016).

#### 3) Watering of Horses

More emphasis should be placed on the teaching of the importance of hydration in animals whether they are at home, travelling, competing or training as dehydration is a key factor and a precursor for many welfare issues. The inclusion of the Practical Guidelines on the Watering of Equine Animals Transported by Road into the Training Course Manual could be considered.

These are a few areas that may possibly need to be reassessed when compiling the Training Course Manual

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