



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses

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## Preface

Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (“the Act”), if you own or are responsible for an animal you have a legal duty to take reasonable steps to ensure its welfare needs are met. The Code explains what you need to do to meet the standard of care the law requires. If you are a parent or guardian of a child less than 16 years old, you are responsible for any animal that child is in charge of.

Breach of a provision of this Code is not an offence in itself but, if proceedings are brought against you for a welfare offence under the Act, the court may take into account the extent to which you have complied with the Code in deciding whether you have committed an offence or have met the required standard of care. You should not cause any unnecessary suffering to your animal; this could constitute a serious offence under the Act.

In the first instance Owners/Keepers should consult their veterinary surgeon (vet) for advice on their animal’s health. You will find reference in the Code to animal care specialists. These are people who, through qualification or experience, can provide expert advice on welfare and some aspects of health for one or more type of animal. Examples are animal behaviourists, veterinary nurses and dedicated welfare organisations.

To find out more about the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and details of your responsibilities under it, see Appendix 2 at the end of this Code. For further sources of information, see Appendix 3.

You should be aware that the legislation cited in the Code and in Appendix 2 is correct at the date of issue but may be subject to subsequent change.

This preface is not part of the Code but is intended to explain its purpose and broad aims. Similarly Appendix 2, which highlights the relevant legal requirements and Appendix 3, which lists some additional sources of information, are not part of the Code.

This Code of Practice was updated with the assistance of the Animal Welfare Network for Wales. The Welsh Government is grateful to the Network for their time and expert recommendations.

## Introduction

In this Code “horse” is intended to cover all domestic horses, ponies, donkeys, and hybrids between them. This word will be used throughout, except where donkeys’ needs are different.

Owning and caring for a horse can be fun and very rewarding, but it is also a big responsibility and a long-term financial and caring commitment. You control your horse’s lifestyle; it is your responsibility to make sure that its needs are met, whatever the circumstances. The Animal Welfare Act 2006 requires that you must take reasonable steps to ensure that it:

- Has a suitable environment to live in.
- Has a healthy diet.
- Is able to behave normally.
- Has appropriate company.
- Is protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

These are explained in more detail in this Code. For further advice, speak to your veterinary surgeon or a suitably qualified specialist. Other sources of information are listed in Appendix 3.

## The Duty of Care

Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 animal owners and keepers have a legal duty to care for the animals for which they are responsible, whether on a permanent or temporary basis. A person could therefore be responsible for an animal if they own it, or if they are in charge of it, whilst an owner has ongoing responsibility for their animal even if another person is in charge of it. A parent or guardian of a child under 16 years old is responsible for any animal that is cared for by the child. This ensures that an adult can normally be identified as a person

Every animal is different and as you get to know your horse, you will learn and recognise its normal appearance and behaviour. It is important that you are able to notice any changes in these as it might indicate that your horse is distressed, unwell, or is not having its needs met in some other way.

A horse being treated by a veterinary surgeon may have additional or special needs specified by the veterinary surgeon which will supersede the requirements of this Code.

For the purpose of this Code, a “keeper” means a person responsible for or in charge of an animal whether on a permanent or temporary basis.

This Code of Practice is issued under section 14 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (the “Act”). This Code of Practice applies in Wales only, is issued by the Welsh Ministers and comes into force on 12 November 2018. It applies to all horses for which a person is responsible.

**It is your responsibility to read the Code of Practice to fully understand your horse’s welfare needs and what the law requires of you.**

responsible for an animal. If a keeper leaves an animal in the care of another person, it is the keeper’s duty to ensure the person is competent and has the necessary authority to act in an emergency.

Responsibility for an animal includes having an understanding of its specific health and welfare needs and having the appropriate knowledge and skills to care for the animal. Those responsible for animals must also comply with legislation, be aware of the appropriate

Code of Practice and know when and where to seek qualified advice and help, e.g. from a farrier or a veterinary surgeon.

More information about the welfare provisions of the Animal Welfare Act 2006, and more details of the responsibilities of a horse keeper, can be found in the appendices to this Code.

The needs of horses are explained in detail in this Code; however, an individual horse may have other needs that need to be met to ensure its well-being. Working horses have special needs that may not apply to horses that are kept as pets; these additional needs should be taken into consideration by keepers. **If a keeper is unsure what these might be, it is important that they seek advice from a veterinary surgeon or an animal care specialist.** Specific welfare advice in relation to competition horses can be sought from sources within the relevant competition discipline.

Before buying or taking on the care of a horse, there are a number of important things to consider:

- Is buying a horse appropriate or should other options such as taking a horse on a short-term or long-term loan be considered? Having a horse on loan can help potential keepers understand the commitment required and the costs associated with keeping a horse. A horse can live for anything up to 40 years and is a long-term commitment.
- The total cost of keeping a horse. The cost of buying a horse may be minimal compared to the ongoing costs, which will vary, depending on the needs of the individual horse, where it is kept and what it is used for. As well as the day-to-day costs, costs for supplementary feeding, worming, insurance, veterinary fees (including regular vaccinations, dentistry and costs incurred through illness or injury), farriery, equipment, transport and training etc. all need to be considered. Consideration should also be given to the cost of end of life care, cost of euthanasia and/or disposal. **Potential keepers should consider all costs before deciding if a horse is affordable.**
- It is important to find the right animal as this can prevent many problems in the future. Choosing a horse with the right nature, of the right breed, to suit the keeper's needs and ability is important. The gender and age of the animal will affect how the horse is to be reared, stabled, fed and/or exercised. Seek advice before making a decision. Before purchasing a horse it is advisable to try a number of different horses, to allow comparison, and the advice of an experienced horseperson should always be sought. Before buying, it is essential to try a horse in each aspect of work that it is likely to be asked to perform, for example hacking, jumping and flatwork, and it is advisable to try out favoured horses more than once. A pre-purchase examination by an independent veterinary surgeon is highly recommended.
- The potential keeper should consider how and where the horse will be kept including whether the horse should be kept on premises with other horses for company. A livery yard may be an option if the keeper needs support in increasing their skills and knowledge.
- Consideration should be given to how much time will need to be spent looking after and exercising the horse.
- Does the potential keeper possess the right skills and knowledge? If not, they should consider gaining prior experience with horses via riding stables or through undertaking voluntary work.

- A potential keeper also needs to consider having contingency plans in place, for example:
    - the provision of stabling and transport for horses (including grass-kept horses) should emergency veterinary treatment be required
    - having isolation facilities (away from contact with other horses) available if required following veterinary advice
    - alternative arrangements for the care of a horse should the keeper become unable to care for it for any reason.
  - Any horses bought or sold must have a valid horse passport (identification document), issued by a Passport Issuing Organisation<sup>1</sup>. The small booklet identifies your animal by its height and species and states if your animal can be used for human food when it dies. Horse passports are a legal requirement. The details of the passport should be checked before purchase, in particular the silhouette (diagram providing markings/colouring) to ensure it matches the horse and, if possible, the microchip to ensure it matches the passport. The issuing organisation that provided the passport can confirm that it has in fact been issued by them. A list of authorised organisations is available on the Welsh Government website.
- These contingency arrangements should be reviewed when there is any change in the keeper or horse's circumstances.

Once a potential keeper has made the decision to buy a horse:

- Careful consideration should be given to where a horse is bought from. If the sale is through a market or horse dealer then the keeper should look carefully at the terms and conditions of sale and get a receipt of purchase.

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/630882/pio-list-studbooks.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/630882/pio-list-studbooks.pdf)

## Section 1: Environment

1.1 This section offers guidance on providing horses with a suitable place to live.

### Shelter

1.2 Not all horses need a stable or housing. Some more hardy breeds (such as native ponies) with thick coats are capable of living outdoors throughout the year, provided they have shelter from the wind and summer sun and access to hard dry standing (e.g. should veterinary treatment be required). Shelter can be natural (e.g. trees or hedges) or man-made. However, where horses are less hardy (e.g. thoroughbreds), clipped, very young or old they may require a stable, housing or other shelter to protect them from rain, wind and extremes of temperature.

1.3 Donkeys originate from Africa and Asia. They are very intolerant of heavy rain, having coats that are not fully waterproof, so need access to shelter and hard dry standing at all times – natural shelter is not sufficient.

### Stable Accommodation/Housing

1.4 Horse welfare should always be considered when constructing or altering buildings to provide housing for horses. The main considerations should be the safety and comfort of the horses, ease of access, light, ventilation and drainage. If poorly designed or managed, housing can contribute to the rapid spread of disease, cause injury or pose a fire risk. Housing should be designed to incorporate the fire safety recommendations set out in the Community and Local Government's "Guide to Fire Safety in Animal Establishments and Stables". The following apply to all forms of housing including individual stables, stalls and communal barns:

- **Construction:** Buildings should be constructed soundly, with no exposed

surfaces or projections likely to cause injury. All surfaces should be capable of being effectively cleaned and disinfected. If surfaces are treated, non-toxic paints or wood preservatives should be used.

- **Fixtures and fittings** such as tie rings, hay racks and water bowls should be free of sharp edges and positioned so as to avoid injury, particularly to the eyes. If used, hay nets should be fixed at the horse's head height, allowing the horse to eat comfortably yet avoiding the risk of the horse getting its feet or head collar caught in the net when empty.
- **Floors** should be reasonably even, non-slip and designed to give good drainage, taking stable waste away from the horse.
- **Doors** should be at least 4 feet (1.2 metres) wide and should not open inwards. A bottom door should be of a height that allows the horse to look out with the head comfortably over the door. Doors should be capable of being securely fastened with top and bottom bolts. During stable design consideration should be given to prevailing winds to ensure adequate ventilation with good air circulation, whilst avoiding excessive draughts.
- **Roofs** should be high enough to provide good ventilation and air circulation. There should be a minimum clear space to the eaves of 60-90 cm (2-3 ft) above the ears of the horse in its normal standing position.
- **Light:** Good lighting is essential within all stabling both for the horse to see adequately and to enable inspection and safe handling of horses; this can include portable lighting. Light bulbs and light switches should be enclosed in safety fittings with cabling secured well out of reach.
- **Windows:** Perspex or safety glass (with grilles fitted between the horse and the glass) is advisable. One window or top door should normally be open at all times.

- **Donkeys require access to a shelter at all times.** The shelter, and area around it, should be free-draining hard standing. Allow approximately 4.5 square metres (50 square feet) of covered area per donkey, approximately 9 square metres (100 square feet) for a pair.

1.5 Horses vary so greatly in size it is difficult to set an ideal size for loose boxes, barns or stables. However, as a minimum, each horse should have sufficient room to lie down, readily rise and turn around in comfort. All passageways should be sufficiently wide to enable horses to be led safely past other horses. The British Horse Society minimum stable size recommendations are as follows:

- Horses – 3.65m x 3.65m (12ft x 12ft)
- Large horses – 3.65m x 4.25m (12ft x 14ft)
- Ponies and Donkeys – 3.05m x 3.05m (10ft x 10ft)
- Large ponies – 3.05m x 3.65m (10ft x 12ft)

Foaling mares and mares with a foal at foot require additional space. A foaling box should measure at least 4.27m by 4.27m (14ft by 14ft).

1.6 Groups of horses can be kept together in communal housing but care should be taken to ensure that all horses have adequate access to feed and water. Sufficient space should be provided to allow free movement and to allow all the horses to lie down at the same time. Care should be taken to select groups that are compatible. Some animals such as particularly aggressive horses, heavily-pregnant mares, mares with foals at foot, stallions and colts should be kept separately.

1.7 Sufficient and suitable bedding material is necessary in all accommodation to provide warmth, protection against injury and to enable horses to lie down in comfort. Bedding material

should be non-toxic, free of dust and mould and allow effective drainage, or be absorbent enough to maintain a dry bed and assist in keeping the air fresh. Where rubber matting is used, it is recommended that disposable bedding should be added to absorb urine. Whatever bedding is used (e.g. straw, shavings, rubber stable mats etc.), it should be well managed and changed or cleaned regularly. The disposal of such waste should also be considered<sup>2,3</sup>.

1.8 Fire is always a risk in stable areas. Advice should be sought from the local Fire Prevention Officer in relation to statutory requirements. All equipment and services (lighting units, fire extinguishers and alarm systems) should be kept clean, inspected annually by an appropriately qualified person and kept in good working order. All electrical installations at mains voltage must be installed, maintained and periodically inspected and tested by a competent electrician in accordance with the latest edition of the Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE) wiring regulations. Wiring and fittings must be inaccessible to horses, well insulated, safeguarded from rodents and properly earthed. All metal pipe work and structural steelwork must be properly earthed. The risk of fire and electrocution can be reduced by having the whole installation protected by a residual current device (RCD). Highly inflammable liquid material or combustible material should not be stored in or close to stables where horses are housed. Roof beams and other ledges should be cleaned regularly. Smoking in stable areas should be prohibited.

1.9 Stable doors should not be padlocked as horses should be capable of being released quickly in the event of a fire or other emergencies in accordance with a pre-determined emergency turnout plan.

<sup>2</sup> <https://naturalresources.wales/?lang=en>

<sup>3</sup> <http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/ahw/animal-by-products/?lang=en>



## Pasture

1.10 As a guide, in order to maintain correct body condition, each horse requires a minimum of 0.4 to 0.6 hectares (one to one and a half acres) of good grazing if no supplementary feeding is being provided. However this will depend on the ground conditions, the time of year, type of horse and degree of pasture management employed. A smaller area may be appropriate where a horse is principally stabled or housed and grazing areas are used only for occasional turnout.

1.11 For donkeys, approximately half an acre (0.2 hectares) of suitable grazing and/or turnout land is recommended for each donkey, so two donkeys will require a field and stable area of approximately one acre (0.4 hectares).

1.12 For overweight animals, and those suffering from obesity related disease such as laminitis, the quality and area of grazing, and the number of hours spent grazing, will need to be restricted. Overweight animals may therefore need to be managed in a separate group to those of the correct body weight. Advice should be sought from a veterinary surgeon.

1.13 It is not always practical or possible to remove horses from fields or pastures which become muddy, however, it is essential that the horse does have a comfortable, well drained area on which to stand and lie down, and on which to be fed and watered.

1.14 A good pasture management programme is advisable to avoid over-grazing (see also 1.10 above), to aid worm control, maintain good drainage and control weeds. This should include, for example, picking up droppings, rotating grazing areas and where possible removing horses when the ground is very wet to prevent poaching (where the pasture breaks into wet muddy patches) and health problems.

1.15 Fencing should be robust and of sufficient height to prevent horses from escaping

(for example higher fences may be required for stallions) and designed, constructed and maintained to avoid the risk of injury with no sharp projections. Gateways should be designed to allow for the easy and safe passage of horses, and gates should be fastened securely to prevent injury and escape. In some situations gates may need to be padlocked. Barbed wire should not be used in fields used by horses. Fencing such as sheep or plain wire, not designed primarily for horses, can cause injury.

1.16 The British Horse Society (BHS) generally recommend that fences should be 1.24m tall (4ft) tall, however more specific recommendations are as follows:

- Horses – 1.08m to 1.38m (3ft 6" to 4ft 6")
- Ponies – 1m to 1.3m (3ft 3" to 4ft 3")
- Lower rail (in both cases) – 0.5m (1ft 6") above ground
- Stallions – 1.25m to 2m (4ft 1" to 6ft 5")

1.17 Stallions may require a double fence line and possibly an electric fence line along the top of the paddock rail. This is to prevent aggression and amorous behaviour between paddocks, as well as containing the stallion within the allocated area.

1.18 Electric fences should be designed, installed and maintained so that contact with them does not cause more than momentary discomfort to the horse; all power units should be correctly earthed. Electric fences should be tested regularly using appropriate equipment. Horses contained by electric fencing need extra supervision until they become accustomed to it. Temporary internal subdivisions created out of electrified tape and plastic posts can provide an effective internal barrier, but these should not be used as the sole boundary fence.

1.19 Fields should be kept clear of dangerous objects and poisonous plants.

## Poisonous Plants

1.20 There are a number of plants including ragwort, sycamore and acorns, that are toxic to horses. Comprehensive lists of poisonous plants can be found on the websites of most horse and welfare organisations. Links to these websites can be found in Appendix 3. Keepers should be familiar with these plants and should ensure that horses do not have access to them (or their clippings) at any time. Where fields back on to housing, care should be taken to ensure that horses do not gain access to kitchen or garden waste including vegetable peelings and lawn cuttings.

1.21 Common Ragwort is a specified weed under the Weeds Act 1959; 'The Code of Practice to Prevent and Control the Spread of Ragwort' was published in November 2011 and is available on the Welsh Government website. All ragwort species (hoary, marsh and oxford ragwort which may also be found in Wales) are toxic to horses and should be removed and disposed of carefully wherever found. Ragwort is also harmful to humans as the toxins can be absorbed through the skin so protective gloves should be worn when handling it. All Ragwort species should be disposed of by incineration, controlled burning or landfill. Ragwort should not be left where horses could have access to it, as once cut it becomes more palatable but remains toxic.

## Tethering

1.22 Tethering can be defined as securing an animal by a chain, to a centre point or anchorage, causing it to be confined to a desired area. Tethering is not a suitable method of management of an animal, as it restricts that animal's freedom to exercise itself, to find food and water, or to escape from attacks by dogs or the extremes of hot and cold weather. It also risks an animal becoming entangled, or injuring itself, on tethering equipment.

1.23 Tethering may be useful as an exceptional short-term method of animal management during brief stops during a journey, to prevent danger to the animal, or to humans, whilst proper long-term arrangements are made, or for medical reasons where short-term restriction of food intake is required under veterinary advice. The need for regular supervision is paramount.

1.24 More details on the conditions that should be met when horses are tethered are set out in Appendix 1. The term 'tethering' as it is used in the Code does not apply to horses that are stall-tied (a common method of stabling cavalry horses). Any horse that is stall-tied should receive regular exercise, unless this method is used under veterinary guidance (e.g. as part of the management of an orthopaedic condition).

## Rugs and Hoods

1.25 Not all horses will need a rug in inclement weather as some hardy breeds with thick coats are capable of living outdoors all year without rugs. Some of these hardy breeds often thrive better without rugs, as rugs can sometimes be a cause of skin irritation. However, where horses are of less hardy breeding, clipped or elderly they may require a rug to help keep them warm and dry during cold, wet weather or provide protection from flies. Turnout rugs will need to be removed when weather (particularly temperature) improves.

1.26 Young, healthy donkeys are extremely unlikely to need a rug, as they should always have access to a field shelter or stable. However, donkeys that are old, sick, underweight or clipped are more susceptible to cold and might need a rug at certain times of the year.

1.27 Rugs and hoods should be of the correct size and weight to suit the horse and the weather conditions, of the correct type

(i.e. designed for the use to which it is being put), and correctly fitted to prevent rubbing, hair loss and abrasions. Rugs should be regularly removed so the horse's body condition and general health can be checked. Ideally this should be done daily.

1.28 Rugs should be cleaned and, if necessary, repaired or reproofed regularly and all fastenings kept in good working order. A spare rug should be available to allow a very wet rug to be dried.

## Supervision

1.29 Horses at grass should, as a minimum, be inspected at least once a day, preferably more often. Stabled or group-housed horses should, as a minimum, be inspected at least twice a day, again preferably more often. Particular attention should be paid to their gait, demeanour, feet, body condition and appetite so that early signs of disease, injury, illness or parasites can be noticed and

appropriate treatment promptly provided. Close examinations should also be conducted at regular intervals in order to identify any problems (e.g. skin conditions) that may not be apparent from a distance. Tethered horses may need to be checked more frequently.

1.30 Hooves of horses should be picked out daily. As lameness could be caused by a variety of factors, legs and hooves should be regularly examined for wounds, injuries, loose shoes, impacted foreign material or anything else unusual.

1.31 Apart from those on turnout and only undertaking very light work, horses should be groomed regularly, but not excessively (which could remove the protective grease from the coat), to ensure that the coat is clean, free from wounds or parasites and to detect rug, tack or harness rubbing.

## Section 2: Diet

2.1 This section offers guidance on providing a horse with a suitable diet.

### Water

2.2 It is essential that all horses have unrestricted access to a clean supply of fresh water, or that adequate clean water is made available to them on a frequent and regular basis throughout the day. If natural water sources such as streams are to be relied on they must be clean, copious and easily accessible. Natural water sources should not be used if there is a risk of horses falling in, becoming trapped or causing environmental damage to access points. Extra care should be taken during hot or freezing weather to ensure the water supply is maintained and sufficient, for example, by regularly breaking ice during cold spells or supplying additional water during hot weather.

2.3 The average daily water requirement of a horse is 20–40 litres (5–10 gallons), but this does depend on the body weight of the horse. Additional water may need to be provided after exercise, for horses with certain health conditions, for mares in the latter stages of pregnancy and lactating mares – a veterinary surgeon should be consulted if necessary. Stabled horses, fed a diet consisting of a higher proportion of dry feed need more water. Fresh water should be supplied in suitable clean drinking vessels e.g. clean buckets, water troughs or via automatic drinking bowls. Drinking vessels should be refilled at least twice a day and should be secured to prevent them from tipping.

2.4 Water troughs should be securely fixed at a convenient height to allow horses to drink comfortably and it should not be possible for horses to paw the water or dislodge the trough and knock it over. There should be no sharp edges, protruding corners or exposed taps –

they should be boxed in. Automatic troughs should be checked regularly to ensure they are working correctly. All water vessels should be cleaned thoroughly on a regular basis. Troughs should be positioned in a way so that it would not be possible for a horse to be trapped or cornered in the area of the trough. Troughs, including those that fill automatically, and buckets should all be checked at least once a day to ensure that horses have water.

### Feed

2.5 Horses naturally eat little and often. Their natural diet is mainly grasses, which have a high roughage and low energy content. Horses should be provided with a balanced, predominately fibre-based diet of either grass, hay, haylage or a hay replacement in order to mimic their natural feeding pattern as closely as possible. They should be fed an appropriate diet that reflects their needs and keeps them in good condition. Consideration should be given to the age, type, weight, condition, health and level of work of the individual.

2.6 Donkeys in their natural habitat will graze and browse, digesting fibrous plant material such as woody trees and shrubs throughout the day and often walk considerable distances. They should have free access to barley straw and can be fed a controlled amount of hay in addition, to maintain condition, throughout the winter months.

2.7 It is important that any change in a horse's diet is made gradually, over an appropriate period of time. This includes moving to a new grazing pasture, or changing from twenty-four hour grazing to being stabled and fed hay. This can help prevent problems such as colic (abdominal pain) which is a very common disorder of horses, and is often associated with changes in diet and management.

2.8 Good grazing should ensure an adequate intake of roughage and minerals; if grazing is poor, supplementary feeding may be required. One way to limit grazing in large areas of grazing land is to divide the land into smaller areas/paddocks by using fencing.

2.9 All conserved forage (hay, haylage etc.) should be of good quality; it should be clean (free from soil, debris and poisonous plants), smell fresh and be free from dust and mould. Feeding forage at floor level is good for horses' respiratory health, provided the underlying ground is kept reasonably clean. It also means that the horse eats in a similar position to that when grazing naturally.

2.10 The quantity of concentrates (this does not include feedstuffs such as chaffs and sugarbeet) fed as supplementary feed, in addition to any grazing or similar fodder, should be no more than that necessary to meet the energy demands of the horse in response to the work the horse is doing. Feed should be well mixed and freshly prepared. Horses should not be asked to perform hard or fast work on a full stomach.

2.11 Feed should be correctly processed, stored in vermin-proof containers, and carefully handled to prevent spoiling and to ensure the nutritional value is maintained. Feed containers and utensils should be kept clean. Contaminated, mouldy or stale leftover food and forage should not be fed to horses and should be removed daily.

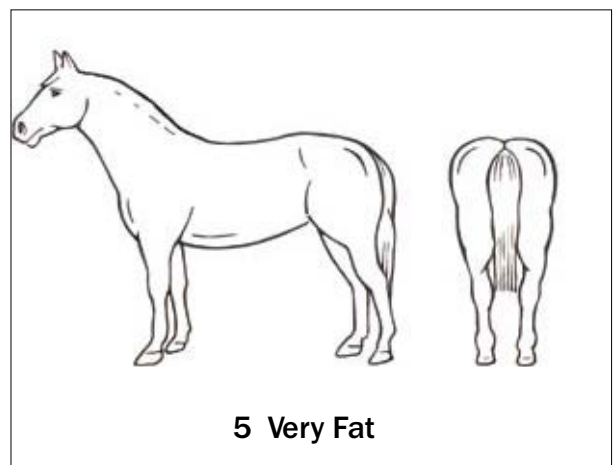
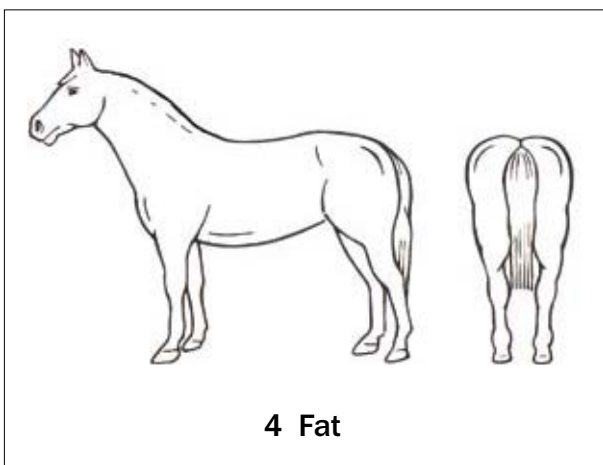
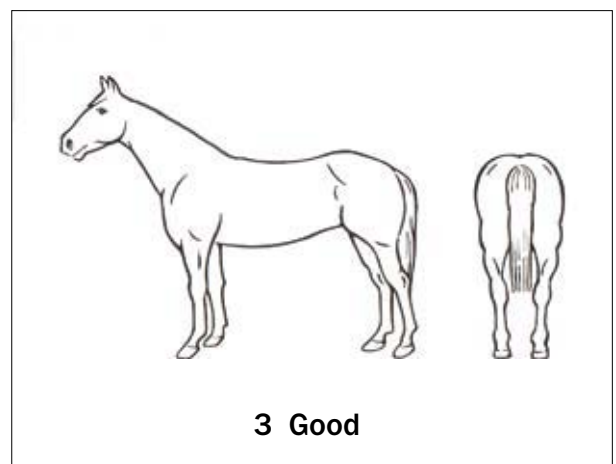
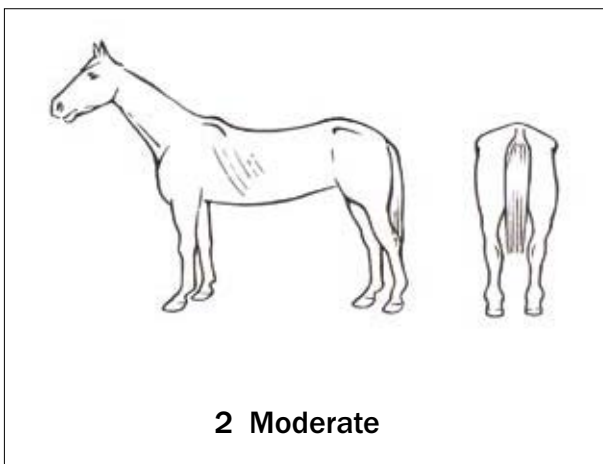
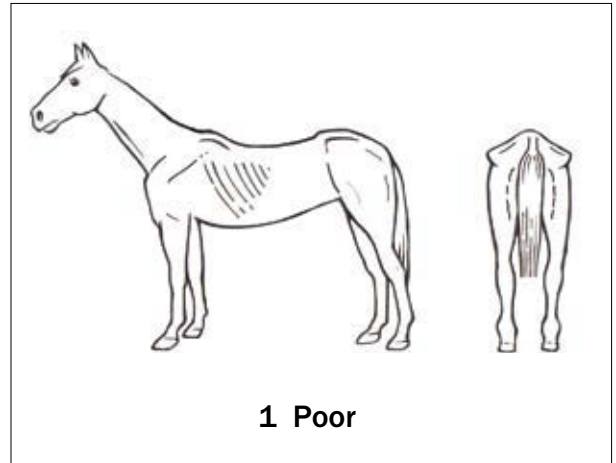
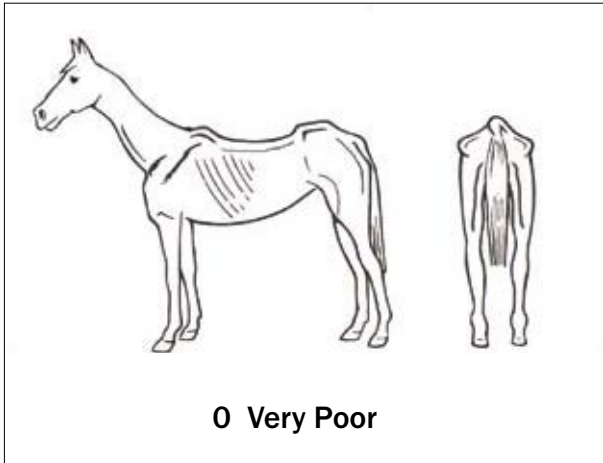
2.12 Where loose horses are fed in groups there should be one feeder per horse plus an extra feeding point (unless using a multifeeder such as a Tombstone feeder specifically designed to multi-feed and reduce competition for food). Two horses' lengths should be allowed between feeders to minimise the risk of injury to horses through competition for food.

2.13 The weight and condition of every horse should be monitored regularly to avoid welfare problems. Feeding should be adjusted as necessary for animals that are too fat or too thin. It is important when feeding that horses are treated as individuals and provided with a tailor-made diet.

**Note:** In cases where horses have changed shape and size it is recommended that the saddlery is checked by a Society of Master Saddlers Registered Qualified Saddle Fitter as a change in condition will effect the fit and therefore comfort and welfare of the horse during its ridden or driving work.

2.14 Obesity is a common and serious welfare problem of horses. Obesity and certain metabolic and dietary factors are among the risk-factors for laminitis – a painful and debilitating disease, affecting the feet of horses. Fat animals are at a higher risk of developing laminitis than animals of a healthy weight. The high energy content of lush grass (e.g. during a spring or autumn flush of grass growth) represents a risk to susceptible animals and their grazing may need to be restricted. Keepers requiring more detailed guidance about laminitis and the correct management of susceptible animals should contact their veterinary surgeon. The Body Condition Scoring diagrams below can help to act as a guide if you are concerned about the condition of a horse or donkey. If further guidance is required then keepers should contact their veterinary surgeon.

## Body Condition Scoring – Horses



## Body Condition Scoring – Horses

Condition Score	Pelvis	Back and Ribs	Neck
0 Very Poor	Angular, skin tight. Very sunken rump. Deep cavity under tail.	Skin tight over ribs. Very prominent and sharp backbone.	Marked ewe neck. Narrow and slack at base.
1 Poor	Prominent pelvis and croup. Sunken rump but skin supple. Deep cavity under tail.	Ribs easily visible. Prominent backbone with sunken skin on either side.	Ewe neck, narrow and slack base.
2 Moderate	Rump flat either side of backbone. Croup well defined, some fat. Slight cavity under tail.	Ribs just visible. Backbone covered but spines can be felt.	Narrow but firm.
3 Good	Covered by fat and rounded. No gutter. Pelvis easily felt.	Ribs just covered and easily felt. No gutter along the back. Backbone well covered but spines can be felt.	No crest (except for stallions) firm neck.
4 Fat	Gutter to root of tail. Pelvis covered by fat. Need firm pressure to feel.	Ribs well covered – need pressure to feel.	Slight crest – Wide and Firm.
5 Very Fat	Deep gutter to root of tail. Skin distended. Pelvis buried, can not be felt.	Ribs buried, can not be felt. Deep gutter along back. Back broad and flat.	Marked crest very wide and firm. Fold of fat.

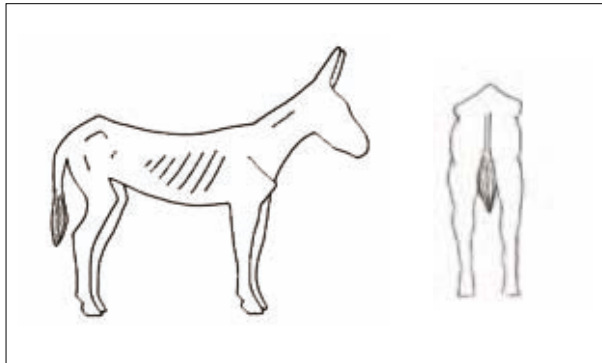
(Based on Carol Huntington Method)

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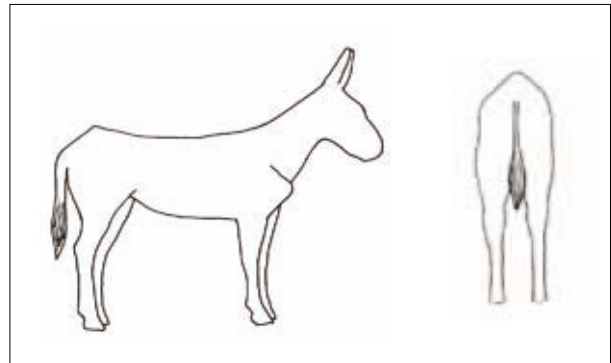
To obtain a body score, score the pelvis first, then adjust by half a point if it differs by one point or more to the neck or back.

## Body Condition Scoring – Donkeys

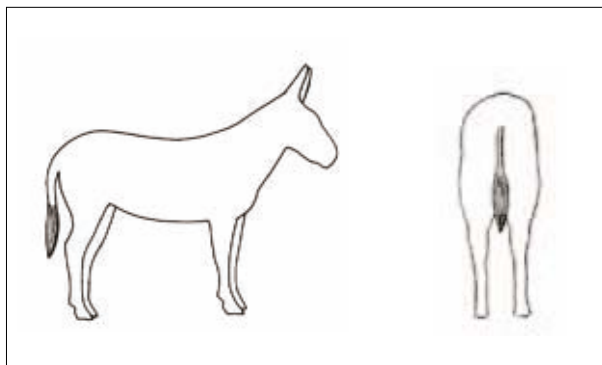
Reproduced with the permission of the Donkey Sanctuary



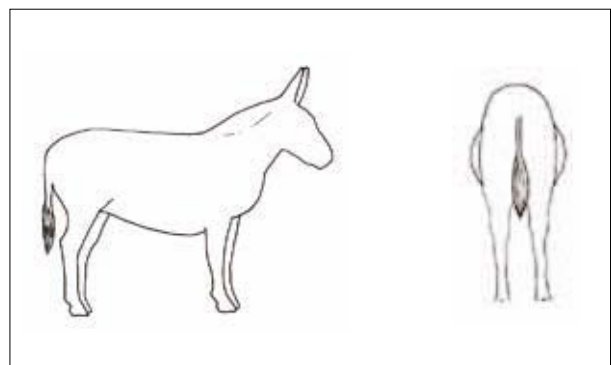
**1 Poor**



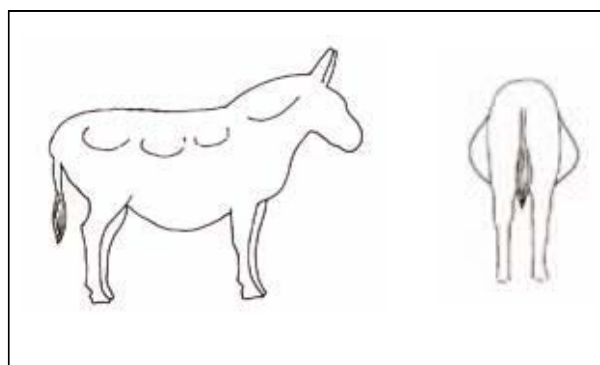
**2 Moderate**



**3 Ideal**



**4 Fat**



**5 Obese**

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Fat deposits may be unevenly distributed especially over the neck and hindquarters. Some resistant fat deposits may be retained in the event of weight loss and/or may calcify (harden). Careful assessment of all areas should be made and combined to give an overall score.



## Body Condition Scoring – Donkeys

Condition Score	Neck and Shoulders	Withers	Ribs and Belly	Back and Loins	Hind Quarters
Poor	Neck thin, all bones easily felt. Neck meets shoulder abruptly. Shoulder bones easily felt, angular.	Dorsal spine of withers prominent and easily felt.	Ribs can be seen from a distance and felt with ease. Belly tucked up.	Backbone prominent, can feel dorsal and transverse processes easily.	Hip bones visible and felt easily (hock and pin bones). Little muscle cover. May be cavity under tail.
Moderate	Some muscle development overlying bones. Slight step where neck muscles meet shoulders.	Some cover over dorsal withers. Spinous processes felt but not prominent.	Ribs not visible but can be felt with ease.	Dorsal and transverse processes felt with light pressure. Poor muscle development either side of midline.	Poor muscle cover on hind quarters, hip bones felt with ease.
Ideal	Good muscle development, bones felt under light cover of muscle/fat. Neck flows smoothly into shoulder, which is rounded.	Good cover of muscle/fat over dorsal spinous processes, withers flow smoothly into back.	Ribs just covered by light layer of fat/muscle, ribs can be felt with light pressure. Belly firm with good muscle tone and flatish outline.	Can not feel individual spinous or transverse processes. Muscle development either side of midline is good.	Good muscle cover in hind quarters, hip bones rounded in appearance, can be felt with light pressure.
Fat	Neck thick, crest hard, shoulder covered in even fat layer.	Withers broad, bones felt with firm pressure.	Ribs dorsally only felt with firm pressure, ventral ribs may be felt more easily. Over developed belly.	Can only feel dorsal and transverse processes with firm pressure. Slight crease along midline.	Hindquarters rounded, bones felt only with firm pressure. Fat deposits evenly placed.

<b>Condition Score</b>	<b>Neck and Shoulders</b>	<b>Withers</b>	<b>Ribs and Belly</b>	<b>Back and Loins</b>	<b>Hind Quarters</b>
Obese	Neck thick, crest bulging with fat and may fall to one side. Shoulder rounded and bulging with fat.	Withers broad, unable to feel bones.	Large often uneven fat deposits covering dorsal and possibly ventral aspect of ribs. Ribs not palpable. Belly pendulous in depth and width.	Back broad, unable to feel spinous or transverse processes. Deep crease along midline, bulging fat either side.	Cannot feel hip bones, fat may overhang either side of tail head, fat often uneven and bulging.

Half scores can be assigned where donkeys fall between scores. Aged donkeys can be hard to condition score due to lack of muscle bulk and tone giving thinner appearance dorsally with dropped belly ventrally, while overall condition may be reasonable.

## Section 3: Behaviour

3.1 This section offers guidance on horse behaviour. It is important for the keeper to understand the species-specific behaviour of horses, donkeys or mules in order to recognise and meet their individual animal's needs.

### Exercise

3.2 Horses and ponies require exercise, which will require time and effort from the horse keeper, or freedom to exercise. All stabled horses should be turned out daily in a field or exercise area unless exercise is being restricted under veterinary guidance. Where turn out is not possible, appropriate daily exercise and/or in hand grazing must be provided as an alternative.

3.3 Any increase in the level of work that a horse is required to perform should be undertaken gradually and consistently, over a suitable length of time. For overweight horses, a programme of daily exercise is important, in combination with dietary changes, to achieve weight loss. No horse should be exercised beyond its capabilities. The age, conformation, health, and fitness of the horse should be considered. Advice on this should be sought from a professional such as a veterinary surgeon.

### Training

3.4 Training should always be sympathetic to the horse and its welfare. Keepers and riders should be aware that training is a gradual process and there is rarely a quick fix. The use of training aids to cut corners should be avoided and they should only be used as a last resort under the supervision of an experienced person.

3.5 Training refers to the ways in which a horse can be taught to perform certain behaviours and actions that we require or desire of it. Most horses will need to be trained in some way, either to be led and handled, ridden or driven in harness. This training should only

be undertaken by an experienced person, in an appropriate and safe place. The safety of the horse and the handler is of paramount importance. The keeper should bear in mind that day to day interaction with their horse will also contribute to its training and care should be taken not to develop poor behaviour.

3.6 Horses learn by reward and repetition so it is important that they are rewarded for a desirable behaviour in a way that encourages them to repeat that behaviour. Negative or harsh training methods are both unacceptable and counter-productive. Horses do not understand which behaviour to exhibit until they have been taught. Most problematic or unwanted behaviours in horses are as a result of pain, fear or incorrect handling. Advice on resolving undesirable behaviour or traits should be sought from a vet, qualified instructor or behaviourist. Advice may be sought from a Society of Master Saddlers Registered Qualified Saddle Fitter as poorly fitting saddlery can be a major cause of discomfort which also results in undesirable behaviour.

### Handling and Restraint

3.7 It is an offence to cause an animal unnecessary suffering therefore any discipline should be appropriate, timely, reasonable and proportionate. Any restraint method used to assist normal management or treatment of a horse should be the most mild and effective method available, and should be applied by a competent person only for the minimum period necessary. Sedative drugs can only be prescribed by a veterinary surgeon, for a horse under their care.

3.8 Whilst small enclosed areas and equipment such as round-pens may be of use when handling or training horses they should not be used to keep horses in for long periods of time and should not be used for disciplinary purposes.

## Section 4: Company

4.1 This section offers guidance on providing a horse with suitable company.

### Social Behaviour

4.2 Horses are herd animals and prefer to live in social groups with other horses. 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. Keeping horses on their own, although not preferable, would require the keeper to provide other appropriate environmental stimulation.

4.3 Donkeys have particular socialisation needs. They bond strongly to other donkeys, but also with horses and mules. Donkeys can become unwell if separated from a companion.

4.4 The individual needs of horses should always be met even when kept in a group. Horses in groups will always develop a pecking order. It is important that the correct amount of space, feed and water is provided to ensure that those lower down the pecking order are getting the feed and water they need.

4.5 It is important to identify if any horses within a group are incompatible, or become incompatible, for whatever reason. This is to protect the health, safety and welfare of the horses in the group and the humans handling them.

4.6 As a general rule, the more horses that are kept, the more time, effort and resources are required to safeguard their welfare. 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.

4.7 When forming new groups or introducing a new animal to an existing group, care should be taken to minimise stress and prevent fighting. This risk can be reduced by increasing the space allowance or by penning a new animal close to the existing group for a short period. Removing the back shoes of all animals during introduction can reduce the risk of injury from kicking.

4.8 Separation of incompatible animals is particularly important; aggressive horses should not be mixed with others. Entire males (colts, stallions) and “rigs” (a stallion with undescended testicles or a horse which has been incompletely castrated) may need to be kept apart from mares to prevent uncontrolled breeding. Mares which are heavily in foal or with a foal at foot might need to be separated temporarily from other horses. It must be remembered that keeping horses on their own, although not preferable, would require the keeper to provide other appropriate environmental stimulation.

## Section 5: Health

5.1 This section offers guidance on the health of a horse and its need to be protected from pain, suffering and disease. It is important for the keeper to understand the species-specific health needs of horses, donkeys or mules in order to recognise and meet their individual animal's needs.

5.2 Everyone responsible for the supervision of horses should be able to recognise signs of ill health and have a basic knowledge of horse first aid. It is also essential that 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 made available to the vet at the time of treatment.

5.3 Keepers of horses should be familiar with the normal behaviour of their horses and be able to recognise signs that may indicate poor health. These can include:

- changes in demeanour or behaviour
- changes in appetite (for food and water)
- signs of pain or lameness (abnormal way of moving, reluctance to move, pawing at the ground)
- the presence of any injury
- unexpected weight loss or weight gain and changes to coat condition
- changes in body temperature, pulse, breathing rate and
- changes in faeces (dung/droppings) and urine

5.4 When a horse becomes unwell immediate action must be taken. Veterinary advice should be sought if a horse appears to be ill, in pain, injured or distressed. Any advice from the veterinary surgeon should be followed thoroughly.

### Routine Health Care

5.5 Keepers should ensure they have an appropriate parasite (worm) control programme in place. Veterinary surgeons can provide advice on the type and use of wormers, which may be based on faecal worm egg counting. Careful pasture management, including the rotation of grazing and dung collection, is an important part of an effective parasite control programme. Inappropriate use of parasite control products can contribute towards drug resistance.

5.6 Where groups of horses are kept together, parasite programmes are most effective if all horses are managed as part of the same programme.

5.7 Horses are very susceptible to tetanus and all should be vaccinated against this potentially fatal condition. A vaccination programme should be discussed and agreed with a veterinary surgeon and then implemented.

5.8 The teeth of horses continuously erupt and wear down throughout their life, and are therefore constantly changing. Most horses will require rasping of their teeth at least once a year. Signs of dental disease can include abnormal chewing of food, abnormal reaction to the bridle, dropping half-chewed food and loss of condition. However, most horses with dental disease show no outward signs at all. Consequently keepers should become familiar with their horse's normal dentition and learn how to regularly examine their horse's mouths. A horse's teeth and oral cavity should be examined by a veterinary surgeon at least once a year. Only a veterinarian is qualified to diagnose dental and oral disease and any treatment of such conditions should be undertaken either by a veterinarian or by a dental technician under their supervision.

5.9 Appropriate foot care is a key component of equine husbandry. A horse's hooves grow continuously and it is important that their feet are regularly inspected. When trimming is necessary it should be undertaken by a competent person. A horse should not be expected to work at a level above that which the hooves are capable of, whether shod or unshod. 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.

5.10 Flies can cause a great deal of irritation to horses, particularly during the summer, and can introduce infection to wounds. 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.

5.11 Keepers should regularly check saddles, bridles and bit fitting, along with checking the saddlery items for rotting, loose stitching and general wear and tear that may need attention before it becomes a health and safety issue for the horse and rider.

## **Disease Prevention (Biosecurity)**

5.12 There are a number of infectious diseases of horses that are present in the UK. Some of these diseases can be transferred from one animal to another by direct contact (horse to horse) or indirect contact (via objects and keepers/handlers). Preventing the introduction and spread of disease is important for the health and welfare of animals and

also avoids the considerable costs that may be associated with a disease outbreak. Therefore, good biosecurity practices are vital.

5.13 In its broadest sense biosecurity encompasses all the steps that can be taken to prevent animals being exposed, both directly and indirectly, to pathogens that might cause disease. It will thus include both measures to prevent the introduction of infection into a premises and measures to prevent the spread of any infection that is introduced. A high standard of biosecurity greatly reduces, but can never totally eliminate, risk. It is a series of risk reduction measures and should be tailored to the specific requirements of each individual premises.

5.14 Effective biosecurity involves planning ahead and some simple things that can be done on a day to day basis include:

- Implementation of good routine management and husbandry practices.
- Ensuring good hygiene procedures (between humans and horses and between different horses) are maintained. Pressure washers, brushes, hoses, water and disinfectant should be available for easy use and be used according to their risk.
- Avoiding stressing horses; stress can predispose some animals to disease.
- Ensuring boundaries are secure; horses should be prevented from mixing, and be unable to make nose to nose contact, with neighbouring animals.
- Only sharing equipment if it has been thoroughly cleansed and disinfected before and after moving between premises or groups of horses.
- Implementation of a pest control programme.
- Keeping access routes, parking areas, feeding and storage areas clean and tidy.
- Having biosecurity arrangements in place for visitors to the premises.

- Developing and implementing a health plan in collaboration with a veterinary surgeon.

5.15 The biosecurity measures that operate on a premises should be set out in the premises' health plan. These should include:

- A protocol for horses entering the premises, including an appropriate quarantine period.
- A parasite control plan.
- A vaccination plan.
- A plan for what to do in the event of a disease outbreak, including provision of isolation facilities.

5.16 New disease outbreaks often start with the introduction of new horses onto a premises. All premises should implement a protocol for the arrival of new horses. This should be done in consultation with a veterinary surgeon. The protocol should cover such elements as those below and it is important to recognise that a number of these elements must necessarily be completed in advance of the movement of the animal to its new home:

- Appropriate assurances with respect to health status of the new animal and the yard from which it is moving. This will include such elements as vaccination and worming history (including certificates) and will require discussion with the existing keeper and possibly their veterinary surgeon.
- Vehicles used for transporting horses should be thoroughly cleansed and disinfected.
- A specified quarantine period during which new horses should be isolated in a designated isolation area, away from other animals.

- An appropriate testing and/or preventative treatment programme (e.g. vaccination and worming) the specific details of which will vary according to the health status of the incoming animal and the source from which it comes.

## Isolation

5.17 It is not always possible to have a dedicated isolation facility. However, large yards and those with a high turnover of horses should make provision for a permanent isolation facility. This may not necessarily take the form of a stable block; a field (with adequate shelter) may be sufficient. Whatever is used, it is imperative that direct and indirect contact between horses in isolation and other animals is prevented.

5.18 New arrivals should be kept in isolation for a period of at least three weeks during which they should be closely monitored. If, after this time, they have shown no signs of contagious illness they can be introduced gradually and carefully to the resident horses.

5.19 Any resident horse that is displaying signs of a contagious disease should be placed immediately in isolation for examination by a veterinary surgeon. Following this, veterinary instructions should be followed.

5.20 During isolation, all contact with other horses should be prevented. Horses in isolation should have their own equipment (grooming kit, yard utensils, tack if appropriate) which should not be used on other horses. Ideally, horses in isolation would be dealt with by different individuals to those caring for other horses. However, this is not always possible. In such circumstances, the resident horses should be dealt with before any in isolation. After horses in isolation have been tended to, the keeper should change their clothes and thoroughly wash and disinfect their hands before interacting with non-isolated horses again.

## Saddlery and Harnesses

5.21 Saddlery and harnesses should be fit for purpose, being appropriate to the needs and abilities of both horse and rider. They should be correctly fitted, preferably by a Registered Qualified Saddle Fitter and the fit should be checked when the animal changes condition. Saddles should also be reassessed at 6-9 month intervals depending upon the horse's age, work load and condition. Equipment should be regularly cleaned and maintained in good order to ensure comfort, safety and effectiveness. Maintenance and repairs should be carried out by a Registered Qualified Saddle Fitter. Equipment should only be shared if it has been thoroughly cleansed and disinfected before and after moving between premises or groups of horses. However, each horse should have its own saddle fitted and the saddle shouldn't be used on other horses.

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

5.23 If boots and bandages are used, they should be correctly fitted to avoid discomfort or injury and only left on for the minimum time necessary.

## Transporting Horses

5.24 The transportation of horses should always be as safe and stress free as possible and in accordance with current rules and regulations. Consideration should be given to an animal's requirement for feed, water and rest. The vehicle should be safe and in good working order. Careful consideration should be given to any specific welfare requirements, for example, if transporting pregnant mares (pregnant or with a foal at foot), suckling foals, or donkeys and their bonded companions (see Appendix 2 for more information).



## Appendix 1: Tethering

Tethering should never be used as a long-term measure to control horses as this can lead to a failure to meet a horse's basic welfare needs as set out in the Animal Welfare Act (2006).

### Suitability of the Animal

1. Not all animals are suitable for tethering.
2. 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. Unwell 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.

### 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.

### 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 20 feet in length; it 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.

### 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 should be made 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.

## 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.

## Exercise

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

## 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.

## Identification

1. All horses in Wales must by law have a passport. In addition all animals born after 1 July 2009 are required to be micro-chipped with the passport containing details of the microchip number.
2. In addition all tethered animals should be marked in such a way as to be permanently identifiable, and from this identification the keeper should be able to be readily contacted.
3. This could be achieved by use of a freeze-brand or alternatively the animal could have some form of identification attached to the head collar or neck strap giving full details of the keeper.

## Appendix 2: 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. Below are extracts from the relevant sections of the Act. The box shaded grey summarises the relevant offences and penalties in the Act.

#### 3 Responsibility for animals

- (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 purposes 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 purposes 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.

#### 4 Unnecessary suffering

- (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.
- (3) The considerations to which it is relevant to have regard when determining for the purposes of this section whether suffering is unnecessary include—
  - (a) whether the suffering could reasonably have been avoided or reduced
  - (b) whether the conduct which caused the suffering was in compliance with any relevant enactment or any relevant provisions of a licence or code of practice issued under an enactment
  - (c) whether the conduct which caused the suffering was for a legitimate purpose, such as—
    - (i) the purpose of benefiting the animal, or
    - (ii) the purpose of protecting a person, property or another animal
  - (d) whether the suffering was proportionate to the purpose of the conduct concerned
  - (e) whether the conduct concerned was in all the circumstances that of a reasonably competent and humane person.
- (4) Nothing in this section applies to the destruction of an animal in an appropriate and humane manner.

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

- (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 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.
- (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.

## 14 Codes of practice

- (1) The appropriate national authority may issue, and may from time to time revise, codes of practice for the purpose of providing practical guidance in respect of any provision made by or under this Act.
- (2) The authority responsible for issuing a code of practice under subsection (1) shall publish the code, and any revision of it, in such manner as it considers appropriate.

- (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) 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

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. 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.

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.

### Other legislation affecting horses

As well as the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and regulations in respect of equine identification (please see Appendix 4) there are a number of other laws that affect the way equines are kept. The ones most likely to affect the keeper of an equine are summarised below.

## Weeds Act 1959

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

Under this Act it is an offence for an unregistered person to describe himself as a farrier or shoeing smith, and 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 or 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”. Veterinary Surgeons and Veterinary Students under supervision are exempt from this general rule.

## The Welfare of Animals Transport (Wales) Order 2007

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

- 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 roll-on/roll-off (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.

## Control of Horses (Wales) Act 2014

The Control of Horses (Wales) Act 2014 provides all local authorities in Wales with consistent legal powers to seize, impound, sell, re-home, return, dispose of and destroy horses by humane means after certain notifications and time limits, when the horses are found causing nuisance by fly grazing, straying or have been abandoned in a local authority area.

The Act is only likely to affect those individuals who abandon their horses or intentionally or negligently permit their horses to graze on land where they do not have the consent of the occupier of the land or where the consent has been withdrawn and the horse keeper has refused to move them.

The provisions within the Act provide for:

- The seizure and impounding of a horse, by the relevant local authority, when the horse is on the highway or any other public place or on other land without the consent

of the occupier of the land and the occupier agrees to the local authority seizing and impounding it.

- The placing of notices about seizure. The local authority is required to post a written notice within 24 hours of seizing a horse, at or near the place where the horse was seized stating the date and time of seizure and how to contact the local authority. It must also, within 24 hours of seizing a horse, give written notices to a police constable and to any person who appears to be the keeper or a person acting on behalf of the keeper of the horse.
- The payment of costs associated with seizure. The keeper is liable to pay the local authority any costs reasonably incurred in the seizure and impounding of the horse and in feeding and maintaining it while it has been impounded,
- The disposal of impounded horses. The local authority may sell or otherwise dispose of the horse, including arranging for its humane destruction if after 7 days no person has notified the local authority that they are either the keeper of the horse or acting on behalf of the keeper of the horse.
- A record of horses dealt with. The local authority is required to keep a register of all horses seized. The register must contain a brief description of the horse, a statement of the date, time and place at which the horse was seized and when it was impounded and details of the steps taken to establish the keeper.

- A resolution of disputes about amounts payable. The keeper of a horse may dispute the amount the local authority claims they are liable to pay within 7 days of receiving a notice and refer the dispute to Welsh Ministers for resolution.

## The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966

This Act makes provision for the management of the veterinary profession, for the registration of veterinary surgeons and veterinary practitioners, for regulating their professional education and professional conduct and for cancelling or suspending registration in cases of misconduct; and for connected purposes.

Section 2(1) of the Act sets out the provision of a register of qualified Veterinary Surgeons (it is illegal for non-veterinarians to carry out procedures such as castration).

## 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.
- Commission Regulation 2015/262 laying down the rules as regards the methods for the identification of equines.
- The Control of Horses Act (Wales) 2014.
- The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966.

### Websites of relevant organisations:

- [www.worldhorsewelfare.org](http://www.worldhorsewelfare.org) – World Horse Welfare
- [www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk](http://www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk) – The Donkey Sanctuary
- [www.bhs.org.uk](http://www.bhs.org.uk) – British Horse Society
- [www.newc.co.uk](http://www.newc.co.uk) – National Equine Welfare Council
- [www.pcuk.org](http://www.pcuk.org) – The Pony Club
- [www.bva.co.uk](http://www.bva.co.uk) – British Veterinary Society
- [www.beva.org.uk](http://www.beva.org.uk) – British Equine Veterinary Association
- [www.farrier-reg.gov.uk](http://www.farrier-reg.gov.uk) – The Farriers Registration Council
- [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk) – The Welsh Government
- [www.hsa.org.uk](http://www.hsa.org.uk) – Humane Slaughter Association
- [www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk) – RSPCA
- [www.ragwort.org.uk](http://www.ragwort.org.uk) – Ragwort Myths and Facts
- [www.mastersaddlers.co.uk](http://www.mastersaddlers.co.uk) – The Society of Master Saddlers

### Useful publications:

#### 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](http://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

#### The Donkey Sanctuary

- The Donkey Care Handbook

## Appendix 4: Identification & Horse Passports

1. Commission Regulation 2015/262 laying down the rules as regards the methods for the identification of equidae was adopted on 11 September 2014 and came into effect throughout the European Union on 1 January 2016. This regulation requires all horses in Wales to have a passport.

2. All horses issued with passports since 1 July 2009 must be micro-chipped and the passport must contain the microchip number. Foals are required to be micro-chipped and issued with a passport before they are six months old or by 31 December in the year of their birth, whichever is the later.

3. Horses must be accompanied by their passport at all times. There are exceptions to this, for example when the horse is stabled, out at pasture or if the horse is moved on foot. Examples of when a passport must accompany a horse:

- When the horse is moved to new premises.
- When the horse is sold.
- When the horse is used for breeding purposes.
- When the horse is moved into or out of the United Kingdom.
- When the horse is used at a competition.
- When the horse is presented at a slaughterhouse for slaughter.
- When the horse is transported (except in the case of being transported for emergency veterinary treatment); and
- When a veterinary surgeon attends the horse to administer vaccinations or if the horse requires medication.

4. The purpose of horse passports is to ensure that any horses that are treated with certain drugs, for example Phenylbutazone (Bute), do not enter the human food chain. The passport states whether a horse can be used for food at the end of its life. Keepers can declare whether or not the horse is intended for human consumption by filling in the appropriate section of the passport. If a keeper declares that the horse is not intended for human consumption this declaration cannot be changed at a later date.

5. The keeper of the horse must give the passport to a veterinary surgeon before it is treated as this will inform them what medications the horse can receive. In the event that it is necessary for the veterinary surgeon to give the horse medications unsuitable for food producing animals the veterinary surgeon will be required to sign the passport denoting the horse is not intended for human consumption. The passport issuing organisation will also need to be informed of this, and it cannot be changed at a later date.

6. A passport must be returned to the Passport Issuing Organisation that issued it when the horse dies to have it invalidated. This must be done within 30 days of the death of the horse.

7. In the event the horse is sold, the passport must be given to the new owner who has 30 days in which to update the change of ownership with the Passport Issuing Organisation.