

The British Horse Society Notes for the Welfare of Horses and Ponies at Events

1. Preface

- In these notes, “horse” refers to all *equidae* and should, where the context allows, be taken to mean “horse or horses”.

2. Introduction

- These notes should be used in conjunction with The British Horse Society Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses and Ponies at Events.
- Under the Animal Welfare Act (2006) and the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006, every horse owner or any individual responsible for a horse, has a ‘duty of care’ to ensure the animal’s welfare.
- All horse owners and show staff are encouraged to read the ‘Strategy to Eradicate and Prevent Strangles (STEPS)’, available from the BHS Welfare Department.

3. Transport

- Competitors need to be aware of The Welfare of Animals During Transport Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 (see points 3.1-3.2).
- General animal welfare provisions apply on **all** journeys.

4. Passports

- Horses being transported to a show must be accompanied by their passport.
- Show organisers may request that horses attending the show are vaccinated against tetanus and influenza (see point 4.3).

5. Welfare of Horses

5.1 Responsibilities of Owners/Keepers/Competitors

- Overall responsibility for the horse lies with the individual who has charge of the horse on the day of the show.
- No horse should be ill treated in any way on the showground.

5.2 Provision of Feed and Water

- The horse should be offered water regularly throughout the day, especially during hot weather. The horse should not be offered ice-cold water to drink.
- During long intervals between classes horses should have adequate rest and the opportunity to eat (see points 5.2.3-5.2.6).

5.3 Welfare of the Horse Whilst Not Competing

- No horse should be left unattended unless they are in the horsebox/trailer, and known to behave sensibly when ordinarily left in such a situation.
- For safety reasons horses should only be tied to a horsebox/trailer if there is a means of the horse being quickly and safely released.
- Horses should not be tethered on the showground.
- The weather conditions will affect the welfare requirements of the horse (see points 5.3.4-5.3.9).
- Competitors who have hacked to the show should have made prior arrangements for provisions and equipment to be available (see point 5.3.10).
- No horse should be ridden all day without sufficient breaks (see point 5.3.11).

5.4 Stabling

- Under no circumstances should any horse be kept in a trailer or horsebox over night.

5.5 Age and Gender of Horses

- Horses under 4 years of age should not be ridden.
- Stallions may not be permitted to attend the show. It is the competitor’s responsibility to check individual show rules.
- Veteran horses must be in good health and condition, and able to cope with the demands of the show day.
- Pregnant mares should not compete under saddle without the agreement of a veterinary surgeon. No mare should be ridden after six months of gestation or with a foal at foot.

5.6 Control of Horses

- Young horses will require quiet, confident handling and it is preferable for the young horse to be accompanied by an older, known experienced horse.
- Horses with strong bonds to their companion should not be left by themselves, as a distressed horse may become a danger.
- It is good practice to lead horses using a bridle.
- Horses that are known to kick should display a red ribbon in their tail.
- If it is the opinion of the show staff that a horse (in particular a stallion) may cause an accident, the horse will be disqualified and asked to leave the showground (see point 5.6.6).

6. Conduct and Responsibilities of Competitors

- Competitors must consider the Health and Safety of all persons and horses on the showground.
- When riding outside of arenas, competitors should remain in walk or trot.
- No competitor should behave in an aggressive or offensive manner.
- By entering a class at the show, the competitor has agreed to abide by the rules and guidelines set by the show organiser.

6.1 Conduct and Responsibilities of Competitors in the Warm-up Arena

- No horse should be asked to spend excessive amounts of time in the warm-up arena.
- Riders should adhere to the rules of working in an arena.
- Lungeing of horses must not at any point interfere with other competitors.
- Galloping is prohibited in the warm-up arena.
- When jumping, no horse should be rapped, jump a fence in the wrong direction or jump a pole/obstacle being held by hand.
- Any horse that falls should not be allowed to compete without the agreement of a veterinary surgeon.

6.2 Conduct and Responsibilities of Competitors in the Show Ring

- If the horse's behaviour becomes dangerous the horse may be required to leave the class.
- Competitors should advise the show steward that they have a young or inexperienced horse.
- Blatantly dangerous and irresponsible riding or handling of the horse may result in the competitor being eliminated from the class.
- The amount of work the horse undertakes should be in accordance with his age, experience and fitness.

7. Discipline of the Horse

7.1 Use of the Whip

- A whip should only be used to reprimand a horse where there is a valid reason and applied at the appropriate time, in the correct place and with the correct severity (see points 7.1.1-7.1.6).
- There are many circumstances when it is not acceptable for the whip to be used (see point 7.1.7).
- The consequences for the misuse of a whip could result in the competitor being verbally warned or disqualified. Legal action could be taken under the Animal Welfare Act (2006) and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006.

7.2 Use of Spurs

- Riders wearing spurs should understand how to wear, apply and use the spurs correctly. Spurs should not be used to reprimand the horse.
- Spurs of excessively severe design must not be worn (see point 7.2.3).

7.3 Use of Tack

- No item of tack should be used to reprimand the horse (see points 7.3.1-7.3.2).

8. Loading Difficult Horses

- Horses that are difficult to load should be handled in a manner that does not compromise their welfare (see points 8.1-8.5).

9. Saddlery and Equipment

- The rulebook of the discipline's governing body should be referred to for information, even when the show itself is unaffiliated.
- Points 9.2-9.9 relate to the correct use and restrictions of specific tack and training aids.