

Minutes of the Meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Horse
held in Committee Room 14 in the House of Commons, London SW1
on Tuesday, 14th May 2013 at 3.30 p.m.

Present:

Baroness Mallalieu (Chairman)
Mrs Lynn Petersen (The British Horse Society)
Mrs Jeanette Allen (The Horse Trust)
Dr Harry Greenway
Mr Lee Hackett (The British Horse Society)
Mrs Jan Rogers (BEF)
Brig Paul Jepson (British Equine Veterinary Assn)
Jessica Stark (World Horse Welfare)
Keith Chandler (BEVA)
Lord Stoddart of Swindon (House of Lords)

Lord Ullswater (House of Lords)
Mr Steven Gauge (PLMR for BHA)
Mr George Haworth (PLMR for BHA)
Mr Roger Williams MP

Apologies: (Shown on last page)

In Attendance:

Miss Karen Irving (Minutes)

The minutes of the last meeting had been circulated and were signed as a true record.

Matters Arising

The Chairman advised that Lord de Mauley had written to thank the group and had taken away the points that were raised. The Chairman reported back to the group on a number of issues Lord de Mauley had addressed in his letter dated 26th March 2013.

Update from Lord de Mauley

Hot Branding

Lord de Mauley advised that the Moorland societies had met on 7th of February and are currently drafting a code of practice on hot branding. He would be meeting with the societies to discuss their work. He advised that a number of changes had occurred on Exmoor, which has resulted in a smaller number of ponies being hot branded.

Defra have taken on board this code of practice and will now try to build on it and take it forward. Currently the Dartmoor Pony societies are reluctant to join the code of practice.

The research project produced a provisional summary on the pain and damage caused by branding. The results have not yet been statistically analysed but currently they appear to show that stress levels are not that high for hot branded ponies. The research project consisted of a number of ponies being hot branded and a number being dummy branded. When they went to catch the ponies again it appeared that those that were dummy branded were actually harder to catch than the others.

Brig. Paul Jepson added that many welfare organisations hold the view that hot branding should be ended.

Action: Brig. Paul Jepson
To contact Defra for update on the Code of Practice

Use of CCTV in Abattoirs

The Chairman advised that Mr Parish was unable to attend this meeting but was meeting with the owner of the abattoir in Cheshire. Defra are currently reluctant to introduce compulsory CCTV as they want establishments to decide which system is most suitable for their premises. Mirrors have been suggested as an alternative but it was felt that these didn't leave evidence for further use if it is a particularly distressing case. Defra ministers are going to raise the issues when they meet the Food Standards Agency.

The abattoir in Taunton has already installed CCTV cameras so it was felt that there was very little reason the one in Cheshire should not install them, especially if they wished to keep the confidence of horse industry.

The Chairman suggested that Horse and Hound may wish to raise this issue in their publication.

Ms Stark reported that the abattoir in question is no longer able to slaughter horses. That it had currently ceased all slaughter due to infrastructure requirements, but was making improvements and would reopen later. World Horse Welfare will monitor horses in that area and how they are being disposed of, as it may become a welfare issue. She advised that there is currently only anecdotal evidence that unwanted horses are being dumped. She also said that a petition calling for compulsory CCTV in all UK slaughterhouses licensed to take horses, which currently has 31000 signatures.

Horse Welfare

The Chairman reported that Lord de Mauley had noted the joint charity report "Left on the Verge: The approaching equine crisis in England & Wales" which highlights the current problems of overbreeding and the economic situation. He is happy to consider proposed solutions but still felt that the "cause lies with irresponsible owners and rogue traders". He advised that horse rescue organisations will need to consider how best to manage horses in their care as there is unlikely to be Government funding to assist with this.

Fly Grazing

He appreciated the concerns of landowners with regard to fly grazing and will discuss this with his opposite number in the Welsh Assembly to see if it is possible to produce joint procedures. He is working on procedures to tackle anti-social behaviour and hoped these could be applied to horses on other peoples land.

The Chairman suggested that most of dumped horses are not passported and that the fault lies with the owners and the shambolic passport system.

National Equine Database

Lord de Mauley advised that he has asked the Equine Sector Council (for Health and Welfare) to look into the possibility of a new Central Equine Database, which could be funded through sponsorship or commercial activity. The Secretary of State has asked for a report on this in the spring.

He advised that the delays with Defra providing information to local authorities should now have been resolved.

There is no funding but the Government appreciates the problems with food standards. There is massive incompliance with those causing the problem. Vets are now taking passports far more seriously and writing to people to ask them to sign their horses out of food chain otherwise they won't prescribe Bute or necessary drugs. It was felt that this may discourage people from disposing of their horses illegally but may result in more unwanted horses.



Miss Allen advised that it may be more relevant for her to provide her update at this point in the meeting as Chair of the Equine Sector Council Steering Group.

She reported that the Steering Group had met with Lord de Mauley and The Rt. Hon Owen Paterson and their officials and that the European Commission has published a Five Point Plan in response to the horse meat scandal, they want to get new regulation on passports before end of year. The Five Point Plan states that there should only be one Passport Issuing Authority per state and that each state should have a mandatory equine database, which the Steering Group felt was an encouraging step forward.

She advised that there were other factors involved and that they had another meeting with Defra arranged for 15th May. The Steering Group reported that their view was that it is vital that the UK horse industry inputs directly into these changes so that a quality standard is built in which ensures a future proofing element and that it is important to ensure that whatever system is implemented is of the highest possible standard.

Miss Allen reported that the Steering Group, in consultation with the wider Equine Sector Council and other stakeholders had been working on establishing the current level of understanding across professions and horse owners of the existing regulations. Various surveys have been conducted including horse owners, vets, local authority enforcers, PIOs and abattoirs which have revealed very clearly a lack of understanding of and confidence in the current system across the board and light touch enforcement. She therefore underlined the additional need for behaviour change, to ensure that horse owners, vets and even PIOs themselves understand their responsibilities under the current or indeed any new regulations and that everyone involved understands the point of passports and the information they need to hold.

She added that the surveys reinforced the view of the Steering Group that a central database will be key to not only any new ID system but also to provide a basis on which the sector can build and engage more directly with key stakeholders about legal responsibilities and regulations. She added that research had also been done on how to make any such additional information available, on top of a statutory database, potentially self-funding and some interesting ideas had been produced that needed further investigation.

She advised that all the individual surveys have now been received and the Steering Group are looking at pulling together all the information. All sectors had a set of initial questions which were the same, and the information from this will be combined. Each then had more specific section for their group. Horse and Hound are interested in breaking this survey however Miss Allen was keen to emphasise this would need sensitive handling.

Brig. Paul Jepson stated that he understood that the European Union are keen that the passport and database are phased in. That the European Union want the database to be created first but Defra want passports to be reformed first. The key point is that although these are currently seen as separate items the horse industry needs to make these one item and not separate entities to ensure that the plans don't fall apart. He stated that he understood that Defra are arguing against separation.

The Chairman questioned how the transfer into a single passport authority would be coordinated and questioned whether the current issuing authorities would be unhappy about no longer making money from passports.

It was suggested that all add on information will have a mark up value. It was felt that the old passports in the system would cause a massive problem. It was suggested that a 6 month passport amnesty should be advocated, it was felt that education should happen first. The need to think about the incorporation of other countries was also raised and it was suggested

that the UK industry needs to ensure that it understands what is happening in the rest of the European Union.

A question was asked regarding whether if an individual made a declaration that their animal would never go into the food chain, would they need a passport? The problem of natural breeds that currently go straight to slaughter was also raised. It was suggested that if all horses and ponies have to be passported then we may potentially see the end of the natural breeds.

Miss Allen advised that the Steering Group will ensure that the issue of current derogations is put on the agenda for debate.

***Action: Equine Sector Council (for Health and Welfare) Steering Group
To put the item of existing derogations on the agenda for discussion with the Defra.***

A suggestion was made as to whether another form of digital media could be used and whether a central information system could replace this as a trusted source which would mean there would be no requirements for Passports

It was advised that there is more to horse passports than traceability with regards to horses entering into the human food chain and that Defra is clear that the traceability of horses is important for disease control and surveillance.

It was hoped that the results of these changes will be safer and give public confidence, as well as being simpler and more widely used.

BIHC Meeting with the Minister 21/4

Lynn Petersen updated the group on her the meeting with David Heath MP. She advised that this had been a very informal occasion the following individuals had been present; Jeanette Allen, Brig. Paul Jepson, Guy Henderson, Andrew Finding, Will Lambe, Louise Kemble and Claire Williams, Tim Morris and Brian Hutton.

She reported that all individuals had the opportunity to put forth their points of view and that David Heath MP was very receptive. The following items were discussed; passporting, the horse crisis, various parts of NED and food safety.

She felt that it had been a very quietly effective day. She advised that The British Horse Society had subsequently entertained The Rt. Hon Owen Paterson MP at Royal Windsor and again raised a variety of issues. She felt that some headway was being made.

The Chairman suggested that there are currently a number of ministers in Defra who are interested in taking forward issues within the equine sector.

Equine Crisis

Mr Hackett stated that although it had been hoped the equine crisis would have passed by now, the BHS had received the most concerns it had ever received during the month of April. The big development was that the culling of animals had now started. The information on this from local authorities had not yet been collated but it was thought that the number was 100 and that these had mostly been in Wales. He felt that this number would unfortunately increase as the chief culprit of fly-grazing was currently on trial. This could mean that 2500 – 3000 of his horses would have to be dealt with. The culling of horses had currently not hit the press but he suggested that if this large scale cull occurs then it may well do so.



He advised that the cases when culls have taken place have usually been complex with a number being due to the mental health of the individuals involved. Local authorities are becoming more co-operative and some are being proactive.

He reported that in Sandwell in Dudley, there is a nature reserve where horses have always been grazed, recently 7 animals had been humanely destroyed because of tethering. The Local Authority in this area are being particularly proactive and have arranged for The BHS to hold a day when they will passport them before moving them to another area, if these animals are not claimed will then have to be destroyed.

He also highlighted the case of the horses on Bodmin Moor, where two mares had died during foaling and at least 12 dead neglected horses had been identified. He stated that a lot of animals are abandoned on Bodmin Moor which is the same issue faced by the Welsh commons.

Ms Stark advised that the organisations are coordinating and are seeing a record number of horses coming in, due to fly grazing, overwhelmed owners and indiscriminate breeders. She highlighted the need to address fly grazing which has always been a big problem in Wales, but is now becoming one in England and Scotland as well. Felt that there needs to be changes in the law. Currently lobbying for changes to the Animals Act of 1971 which would give Local Authorities and landowners the authority to act when animals are placed on their land, and mean that instead of having to sell them at a local market, they would be allowed to rehome or dispose of them. She felt that these small changes would help to save horses from unnecessary suffering. She stated the need to discourage owners from fly-grazing and felt that although the central database may help, more onus needed to be placed on owners to prove ownership. She felt that the database should hold a link to the owner otherwise Local Authorities will still be responsible for abandoned horses.

It was suggested that currently a number of members of the House of Commons are looking to bring Private Members bills and that it may potentially be a good idea to look at those who have been in the ballot and identify whether they have any interest in horses and would be interested in taking any of the issues forward.

Mr Hackett advised that contingency plans were in place for the problem he had identified but that they were not as far forward as could be hoped as the case was proceeding faster than expected. It was not known how many horses would need to be dealt with as those worth any amount of money may disappear. He advised that it will be horrible for personnel involved.

Castration Campaign

Mr Hackett advised that the horse industry is trying to help tackle the problem of overbreeding. That the ideal situation would be the reintroduction of stallion licensing but that since this is unlikely to happen, they are promoting responsible breeding together with breed societies. He advised that large sectors of horse community are not those involved with welfare agencies or breed societies, but that The British Horse Society is engaging with these sectors and have arranged passport and micro-chipping days in order to accomplish this. 50/60 horses are usually passported and micro-chipped during one day and that these days are subsidised.

This is currently being expanded to include pop up castration clinics with involvement from a number of organisations. A pilot was carried out and 27 horses were castrated in one day, which although a small amount was a good number for the pilot area. He felt that this is an important project as many horses are tethered on public land and would become safer if they were castrated. He also felt it was an important engagement project as it provides education and builds relationships with communities.

Disease Update and Biosecurity

Mr Chandler advised that the main concern at this time was the Equine Herpes virus; there had been media impact from this because of the impact on the industry in the South. He advised that although the Virus causes abortion it does not usually cause many other problems. BEVA are currently not that concerned about it as the outbreak appears to have come to an end with no new cases occurring. He advised that most horses will have had it before they are a year old. He advised that vaccine supplies were used up during the outbreak and that if vaccines are used on horses that have this disease it can make it worse.

The over use of anti microbials and antibiotics is producing a danger of diseases becoming resistant to them. BEVA has therefore produced guidelines on the use of antibiotics for vets. These outline which antibiotics to use in which cases and have been downloaded from their website 1000's of times by their members.

The other issue was anabolic steroids being used in racing; these were apparently used by a Newmarket based trainer. It was found that these medicines were actually used inappropriately on the horses concerned whilst they had been in Dubai, this created a shock as it would not have happened in the UK, as most vets would not have these products in their pharmacy.

Another story broke about some trainers having horses which tested positive, this was down to these drugs being tested in a different way, in these cases they had been used to improve the condition of joints in horses that had problems. In some horses where other treatments had failed the use of small amounts of anabolic steroids seemed to cause improvement. The use of these steroids seemed to be due to a breakdown in communication as these are strictly prohibited here, although they are used elsewhere in world. A presentation had taken place by a vet at a conference, which had suggested success rate was very good in some cases, so these drugs were used as a last chance to improve joint conditions and would have been far too small doses to have effect on their body condition. These are two separate things and the BHA is still investigating the use of them.

Brig. Jepson made an addition to the comments on equine herpes; he advised it is endemic in this country and not a new strain. That it usually causes respiratory problems, but sometimes causes paralysis but this is an individual reaction depending on the horse. There are cases every year but were perhaps more than normal this year which is why it gained media attention.

Brig. Jepson advised that with Flu vaccines have different vaccines for different strains for humans but that this is not the case with regards to horses. The industry has acknowledged and accepted that it is not keeping pace and want to do better. Defra were tackled about the reason they are not able to keep up and we were advised that this is purely down to red tape. This is not something that manufacturers find difficult to do but they are required to go through a lot of hoops to make changes. He felt that if this can be changed it would not be expense to make different vaccines for different strains but that it would be effective. The veterinary medical directorate need to be persuaded that what happens in human industry can happen in horse industry.

A question was raised as to whether BEVA were happy that all medications prescribed to horses are entered into horse passports.

Mr Chandler responded that this is not always happening for those animals that are left in food chain, as there is not much space to keep a record of this on the current passport. In addition there is currently great complexity of how to use passports, with vets and individuals not

recording information as they should. The vets are keeping computerised records but these are not always recorded in the passport as they should be.

Ms Allan stated that micro-chipping should be looked into as although many people like the current silhouette that is used it is incredibly difficult to differentiate between horses without micro chipping. She stated the need for these to be linked, so that abattoirs can read the microchip and therefore know it is safe to slaughter the animal. She suggested that the current system could lead to temptation at the point when individuals are destroying equines, as some people could add different pages to passports and get £100 for the horse rather than paying £300 to get the horse destroyed.

Mr Chandler also advised that the current documents don't last as long as horses, with some horses having 3 and some with ones from different countries. He suggested that a passport amnesty would be a good solution especially due to the availability of Bute.

Ms Allan stated that is not reasonable to ask a vet not to treat a horse in a field just because the passport is not present.

It was advised that only foals born from 2009 are currently micro chipped and passported. Lord Ullswater advised that he understood that that all horses in racing are microchipped.

The suggestion was made that it may be a possibility for the government to subcontract to Wetherby's

Membership of this Group

The Chairman advised the group that there had been requests from other groups who wished to send members to participate in the APPG of the Horse. She advised that the current members of the All Party Parliamentary Group for the horse were as followed; British Equestrian Federation (BEF), British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA), British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA), British Horseracing Authority (BHA), The British Horse Society (BHS), The Horse Trust, RSPCA and World Horse Welfare. She felt that it was important for it to be kept to a small group. She asked whether the group felt that the National Equine Welfare Council (NEWC) should have a representative on the group and stated that if any member had strong views on this then they should bring this for discussion to the next meeting.

If you feel official list doesn't

Dates of 2013 Meetings

Tuesday, 9th July 2013 at 3.30 pm
Tuesday, 3rd December 2013 at 4 pm

The Chairman advised that the next meeting of the APPG of the Horse on Tuesday 9th July, would be the AGM. She felt that the group did an excellent job communicating what is going on, although potentially it did duplicate welfare aspect with the APPG for Welfare. She suggested that there may be things that could be done with the group which had not been done in past. She felt it was important to ensure that parliamentarians were fully briefed; she felt that the group could produce reports to gain publicity for the aspects that are covered. She asked the group to provide her with topics which they felt it was important to be covered.

PJ thanks BM

M. Ullswater
9.7.13



Secretariat provided by
The British Horse Society

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The meeting ended at 4.20 pm.

Apologies

Mr David Bowles (RSPCA)
Baroness Byford
Sir Tony Cunningham MP
Mr Nicolas de Brauwere MRCVS (NEWC)
Mr Andrew Finding (BEF)
Baroness Masham of Ilton
Mr Neil Parish MP
Mr Keith Taylor (BEF)
Annemarie Westwood (BHS)



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