

# Policy Statement

**Policy Title:** Tethered Horses

**Number:** 07.18V3

**Functional Area:** Welfare

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<b>Brief Description:</b>	Welfare of tethered horses and related legislation
<b>Effective:</b>	July 2018
<b>Approved by:</b>	Welfare
<b>Responsible Department:</b>	Welfare
<b>Policy Contact:</b>	anne.skivington@bhs.org.uk
<b>Supersedes:</b>	N/A
<b>Last Reviewed/Updated:</b>	July 2018
<b>Applies to:</b>	Horse owners

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**Reason for Policy:** To provide a position statement on tethering horses

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Tethering horses is a short term means of grazing horses on areas of ground without suitable fencing. However when this is used as a long term solution to free range grazing the welfare of the horse can be compromised.

## II. POLICY STATEMENT

The horse is a herd animal that in the wild roams up to 10 miles a day in order to sustain trickle feeding. By comparison, tethering does provide the opportunity for forward movement but in a very limited way. A tethering chain of seven meter long restricts the behavioural need to be free roaming and is a source of stress for horses, potentially creating unwanted behaviours<sup>1</sup>. A tether of three meters or less has been shown to stop a horse from grazing altogether; the most likely cause being restricted availability of good quality forage<sup>2</sup>. Another source of stress is the isolation or restricted interaction with other horses, for example mutual grooming for social bonding. Isolation of the horse is known to activate the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis and endocrine glands to produce corticosteroids; which if continuously stimulated creates post-traumatic stress disorder.

Tethering also restricts daily intake of fiber due to areas being quickly over grazed. This restricted intake reduces the functionality of the digestive system with potentially severe implications if sustained<sup>4</sup>. Although horses have the ability to reduce metabolic rate in times of poor nutrition<sup>5</sup>, continuous exposure to overgrazed areas could result in poor growth of young stock and will continue the cycle of re-infestation of the horse with internal parasites.

It is well documented that horses secured by this method for sustained periods of time suffer damage to underlying tissues. The tether moves across the affected area, rubbing the underlying skin causing friction burns that take days or weeks to appear. Direct pressure applied to a small surface area can also cut

through the skin and into underlying soft tissue. Repeated pressure can result in remodeling with extreme cases destroying all layers of the epidermis causing a hairless scar.

Another important consideration is shelter from bad weather. Access to trees or dense hedges can protect a horse from prevailing wind and rain. Exposure to extremes of weather can be detrimental to the health of the horse; with prolonged exposure to rain causing rain scald.

Identification of the tethered horse is a major factor in changing the attitudes of owners as identification will ultimately enforce responsibility. Currently the cost of removing a tethered horse from council land is £1340 per horse; not taking into consideration the man hours involved in trying to identify the horse.

However the key to increasing the welfare of horses is not to ban tethering but instead to support and educate owners to address the cause of welfare issues. When tethering is discouraged the horses are more likely to be moved out of the public eye, making it very difficult to monitor their welfare; potentially compounding the problem with horses being kept in gardens or garages with little or no access to water or forage and increasing antisocial behaviour. It is also important to consider the environmental impact of tethered grazing as it encourages severely overgrazed areas with reducing grass sward diversity.

### **III. DEFINITIONS**

### **IV. RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES, FORMS, GUIDELINES, AND OTHER RESOURCES**

- A. Policy Statements and Other Policies N/A
- B. Procedures N/A
- C. Forms N/A
- D. Guidelines – Control of horses bill available from <http://www.bhs.org.uk/our-charity/press-centre/news/july-to-dec-2014/coh-bill>
- E. Other Resources (i.e. training, secondary contact information)
- F. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### **V. HISTORY**