

# Health & Safety Event medical & veterinary cover

Guidance for Equestrian Access Groups



**Date of issue:** 10 June 2026    **Approved by:** Laura Sanger, Director of Participation

The information within this document has been written following guidance provided by British Riding Clubs. Some parts have been tailored to cover the specific activities of BHS affiliated Equestrian Access Groups.

## Introduction

The detailed requirements of the law on Health and Safety Standards are extensive.

Health and safety at an event is dependent upon the organisers of that event taking reasonable precautions and, just as important, upon those participating in, or attending an event, preventing accidents and abiding by the instructions given by officials and helpers at events.

The Health and Safety at Work Act (HASAW) 1974 places responsibility for safety on every person involved. Organisers of any event – including pleasure rides, bridleway and route clearances, lectures and demonstrations, training days, and social events - should also be aware of the implications of this Act.

## Contents

<b>Health and Safety Standards .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Health and Safety Statement .....	2
Health and Safety Adviser .....	3
Event Safety File.....	4
<b>Medical and Veterinary Cover for Events.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Medical and Veterinary Cover Risk Assessments .....	5
Medical and Veterinary Cover Checklist.....	6
Levels of Medical Cover .....	7
Levels of Veterinary Cover .....	8
Recommended Minimum Level of Cover for Events and Activities.....	8
<b>Other Health and Safety Considerations .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Reporting of Injuries and Dangerous Occurrences (Oct 2013) to HSE and BHS .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Incidents that must be reported .....	11
<b>Support and Guidance .....</b>	<b>12</b>

## Health and Safety Standards

Health and Safety Standards and requirements vary enormously from event to event. Whilst at a small event, the requirements may be met relatively easily; the same would not apply at a major event where there may be trade stands, large numbers of attendees including spectators, and contractors on site.

Compliance with Health and Safety Standards is as important during the preparation before an event and the clear-up afterwards as it is during the actual event. We must always remember that events may be attended by parents with young families, people with dogs, or cross paths with members of the public and rights of way users, many of whom have no knowledge of horses, or how to behave when close to them.

Organisers, trade stand personnel, contractors and their respective employees as well as those who have, to any extent, control of the premises, or site on which the event is being held, are responsible for ensuring that:

- everything reasonably practicable is done to ensure health, safety and welfare of those attending the event
- they conduct themselves so that they do not put themselves or anyone else at risk
- the access to and egress from the site is safe and unobstructed
- members of the public and event participants are equally responsible for ensuring that they do not put other persons at risk, and that they co-operate with the organisers in complying with health and safety legislation

## Health and Safety Statement

Organisers are required, where there are five or more employees\* at an event, and advised where there are fewer than five employees\*, to prepare a policy statement in respect of the overall safety of the event. The policy should include procedures to be followed in an emergency and should be included in the programme, where appropriate.

*\* Under the Employers Liability insurance provided via BHS for EAGs, the definition of 'employee' within the policy includes 'volunteers'.*

## Example Health and Safety Statement

### HEALTH and SAFETY POLICY FOR (Name of event)

1. The organiser has overall responsibility for Health and Safety.
2. The event is organised in accordance with Health and Safety Legislation and all who have, to any extent, control of the premises, or site on which the event are responsible for ensuring that:
  - Everything reasonably practicable is done to ensure health, safety and welfare of those attending the event
  - They conduct themselves so that they do not put themselves or anyone else at risk
  - The access to and egress from the site is safe and unobstructed.
3. Emergencies
  - Emergency services must have access to all parts of the event site at all times and members of the public must not park vehicles so as to obstruct access.
  - First aid points are clearly marked.
  - In the case of an emergency, members of the public should contact the nearest official or dial 999 on the nearest telephone. Telephones are located at (enter location).
4. Horses

Horses can easily be frightened and can be dangerous. Members of the public are requested to keep clear from horse areas/lanes and to avoid behaviour that might alarm horses.
5. Dogs

Dogs should be kept under close control and on a short lead. The dangerous dogs act now covers private land (Nov 2014).

## Health and Safety Adviser

A competent and knowledgeable person must be appointed as the Safety Adviser of the event, regardless of the size of the event; this should be someone involved with the organisation of the event. The Health and Safety Adviser must attend the event but can delegate specific tasks to appropriate individuals whilst retaining overall responsibility themselves.

Everyone involved with the event - all officials, judges, stewards, volunteers etc. - must know the name of the Safety Adviser and a communication chain must be established between all

involved in the organisation and running of the event. All must be fully briefed on their respective health and safety responsibilities and must understand their role in any emergency situations. This information is normally contained in the Event Safety File.

### **Event Safety File**

Organisers should have an Event Safety File, compiled by the Health and Safety Adviser for all events.

#### **For small events this will be quite a small document consisting of:**

- health and safety policy statement
- emergency telephone numbers
- an event risk assessment
- notes for safety briefing

#### **For larger events, the file will consist of the following elements:**

- health and safety policy statement
- event organisation – officials and stewards, timetables
- emergency telephone numbers, including all officials, medical, veterinary and main stewards mobile numbers
- any special conditions imposed by the land or premises owner
- safety plan including site plans, vehicular routes, emergency meeting points etc.
- other health and safety considerations and safety checklist
- notes for safety briefing
- communication, including radio procedures and a communications plan
- risk assessment – basic information (i.e. type of event, numbers of competitors, spectators, officials etc., access and exit details, parking areas, signs etc.)
- event risk assessment – detailed information (i.e. the activity, the hazards, risk severity, risk potential and control measures)
- serious incident protocol

For more information on Event Safety Files please contact BHS Access & Rights of Way Team.

## Medical and Veterinary Cover for Events

It is the responsibility of the organiser of any event to ensure that adequate medical provision is provided, and where horses are attending the event, veterinary provision also.

In order to ascertain what level of cover is required a risk assessment should be carried out which looks at the types of activity taking place, the number of participants involved, the accessibility of the site, including the ability of the medics and vets to access all areas of the site, and the proximity of the emergency services to the venue.

The minimum requirements can be found below. For activities where no minimum requirements are stated, it is up to the organiser to use their risk assessment to ascertain what level of cover they feel would be suitable.

For insurance purposes, any first aiders used must be voluntary (paying expenses is acceptable) or an employee\* of the Equestrian Access Group. If a fee is paid, then the first aider becomes a contractor who would need their own insurance.

*\* Under the Employers Liability insurance provided via BHS for EAGs, the definition of 'employee' within the policy includes 'volunteers'.*

Any organiser wanting to use a professional with a “higher qualification” than a First Aid at Work or BHS first aid, as the first aider, should contact the BHS Access & Rights of Way Team for further details.

It is the organiser's responsibility to ensure that the nominated first aider has the relevant qualifications.

## Medical and Veterinary Cover Risk Assessments

All events and activities must have undergone a medical and veterinary risk assessment. This should be documented to establish appropriate levels and control measures in place prior to the event or activity and must take into account nature and number of persons attending, location environment, and type of activity and proximity of external medical and veterinary services. At all events there should be means to provide privacy for the patient either by screens, gazebos or use of cars to block view from public.

Multiple phase events (such as eventing and horse trials) should treat each phase separately when establishing medical / veterinary cover.

## Medical and Veterinary Cover Checklist

Task	Date completed
The organiser should confirm all bookings for medics and vets in writing.	
The organiser should confirm all final arrangements two weeks prior to the event. A telephone reminder two days prior to the event should act as a final confirmation of attendance.	
The organiser should alert the local accident and emergency department of any forthcoming event or competition.	
The organiser should provide the doctor, paramedic and first aider with the post code and OS grid reference for the competition venue. Ideally the What3Words address should also be provided. In the event of an accident or injury occurring, these details will prove invaluable when advising the county ambulance or air ambulance of the location of the casualty.	
The organiser should notify the medical and/or veterinary cover provider they should not be allowed to leave the event or competition until 30 minutes after the last horse has finished, or 30 minutes after the last prize giving if it is a mounted prize giving.	
The organiser should have available the details of the veterinary surgery which will be used in the case of any equine referrals.	
The organiser should have available the details of the person to be contacted in the event of an equine fatality where disposal of the body will be necessary.	
Event schedules must include medical & veterinary provisions that are in place and how this assistance can be obtained with point of contact for assistance.	

- Organisers and Official Stewards must note that the above are minimum requirements and good planning and care may mean that enhanced medical and veterinary cover is more appropriate for the particular event.
- Cost of provision should not be the overriding factor.
- If medical and veterinary personnel are deployed to an incident, consideration must be given to suspending the event until minimum cover can be re-established prior to restarting.

## Levels of Medical Cover

<p><b>Level 1</b></p>	<p><b>Emergency first aider with a suitable first aid kit.</b></p> <p>This is someone who holds either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Emergency First Aid at Work certified qualification, accredited by a training organisation regulator (Ofqual, SQA or the Welsh Government) or voluntary aid society (St John Ambulance, St Andrew’s First Aid or British Red Cross). This is usually a 1-day course for both the initial and refresher.</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b) Emergency First Aid at Work + Equestrian Specific Module (provided by First Aid Training Co-operative). This is usually a 1-day course for both the initial and refresher.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 2</b></p>	<p><b>First Aid at Work (FAW) first aider with a suitable first aid kit.</b></p> <p>This is someone who holds either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) A First Aid at Work certified qualification, accredited by a training organisation regulator (Ofqual, SQA or the Welsh Government) or voluntary aid society (St John Ambulance, St Andrew’s First Aid or British Red Cross). This is usually a 3-day initial course with a 2-day refresher every three years.</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b) BHS Equine Specific First Aid Completed Course presented by Skillbase and booked through the BHS. This is usually a 2-day initial course with a 1-day refresher every three years. For further information or to make a booking, please contact the BHS education team at <a href="mailto:education@bhs.org.uk">education@bhs.org.uk</a>.</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c) First Aid at Work with equestrian specific course content, accredited by a training organisation regulator (Ofqual, SQA or the Welsh Government)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 3</b></p>	<p>Registered and qualified paramedic <b>OR</b> trauma trained doctor <b>with</b> a 4-wheel drive ambulance capable of moving a casualty from a remote site using approved medical rescue equipment as deemed medically appropriate by attending medical staff.</p>

## Levels of Veterinary Cover

<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Vet on Call</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This must be a suitable vet with suitable kit i.e. large animal vet</li> <li>• The risk assessment must consider the time it takes for the vet to arrive on site</li> <li>• The vet <b>MUST</b> be aware they are on call</li> <li>• The details for this type of cover should be put on the schedule or booking form so everyone attending is aware of the arrangements for cover and can make a decision to still participate</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Vet on Site</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This must be a suitable vet with suitable kit i.e. large animal vet</li> <li>• With the facility to transport an injured horse i.e. a dedicated vehicle and trailer or horse ambulance</li> <li>• With the equipment needed for the humane destruction of a horse and removal of the body</li> </ul>

## Recommended Minimum Level of Cover for Events and Activities

Type of activity	Minimum level of	
	Medical cover	Veterinary cover
Dressage and test riding	Level 1	Level 1
Showing – in-hand	Level 1	Level 1
Showing – ridden (flat only)	Level 2	Level 1
Show jumping and style jumping	Level 2	Level 1
Working hunter	Level 2	Level 1
Combined training	Level 2	Level 1
Arena eventing – with knock down fences	Level 2	Level 1
Arena eventing – with solid / fixed fences	Level 3	Level 2
Cross country competition	Level 3	Level 2

Type of activity	Minimum level of	
	Medical cover	Veterinary cover
Eventing and Horse Trials - each phase should be assessed separately	Level 3	Level 2
Pleasure ride – with no jumps or knock-down fences	Level 2	Level 1
Pleasure ride – with solid / fixed fences	Level 3	Level 2
Escorted / guided ride	Level 1	Level 1
Park and ride	Level 1	Level 1
Lessons - including cross country	Level 1	N/A unless identified in the risk assessment
Camps - each phase should be assessed separately	Assess activity	Assess activity
Lectures and demos - unmounted	Level 1	N/A unless identified in the risk assessment
Lectures and demos - mounted	Level 1	Level 1
Stable management	Level 1	N/A unless identified in the risk assessment
Yard visits	Level 1	N/A unless identified in the risk assessment
Quiz nights	Level 1	N/A unless identified in the risk assessment
General social events	Level 1	N/A unless identified in the risk assessment
Meetings held in-person	Level 1	N/A unless identified in the risk assessment
Bridleway clearances – hand tools only	Level 1	N/A unless identified in the risk assessment

**If there is an event type not listed, please contact the BHS Access and Rights of Way Team for guidance.**

## Other Health and Safety Considerations

In order to make these guidelines manageable, other considerations are listed below with appropriate points for checking. If you require a more detailed explanation to any of the following points please contact BHS Access & Rights of Way Team.

- **Alcoholic Refreshments:** licences are required if alcohol is on sale (one months' notice required); must not be sold to under 18's.
- **ATV's and Motorcycles:** remember that ATV's (All Terrain Vehicles) are inherently unstable; only event officials over 17 who have received correct training and hold appropriate licences with no serious convictions should ride/drive these machines. Passengers should not be carried unless the vehicle is designed or adapted for that purpose except in an emergency. Drivers/riders must wear motorcycle helmets to BS536 specification. The vehicles must be roadworthy and maintained in a good condition and are only to be used for purposes directly connected to the event. If they have to travel on or across a public road they must have current motor insurance. Children are not permitted to operate machinery.
- **Access Routes:** Pedestrian and vehicle access routes to and from the car parks must be safe and clearly signed; if possible, have a one-way system; police should be consulted on traffic problems with public roads.
- **Buildings and Structures:** Adequate lighting; safety of buildings and their contents.
- **Children:** Additional precautions are required to ensure the safety of children.
- **Construction of Rings:** It is suggested that rings are made of permanent post and rail fencing where possible or temporary post and rope fencing using either wooden or plastic posts but never metal posts. Rope should be divided into sections and joined by an easily breakable connection so that in the event of a horse or pony running through the rope it will break. Always provide secure fencing, barrier tape is not sufficient.
- **Electricity:** position and routes of overhead and underground electric cables and distribution systems; avoidance of danger from overhead electric lines and metal structures (i.e. flag poles); evidence of recent examination and test certificates for electrical installations; low voltage system trunking and cables; earthing and earth leakage protection; inspection and testing of electrical apparatus; disconnection and removal of temporary installations.
- **Fire Precautions:** the local fire service should be consulted concerning emergency access for their appliances; emergency exits and suitable signs; adequate emergency fire fighting equipment and extinguishers, fire precautions in temporary structures; no smoking areas (stables, grandstands, all enclosed public spaces). Fire extinguishers should be provided in stable and secretarial areas.
- **Food Hygiene:** Caterers must comply with the local Environmental Health Department legislation.

- **Gas (Mains and LPG):** position and routes of mains gas pipelines underneath or near the site; trade stand staff and caterers with LPG appliances must have them examined and tested by a competent person, and stored in a safe position.
- **Generators:** position well clear of tents, straw bales etc. which can easily catch fire. All generators must be correctly earthed.
- **Machinery:** can only be used by competent people who have received the correct training. Loaned equipment must be fully serviceable. Plant and machinery must only be operated after adequate safety precautions have been taken. Chainsaw operators must be correctly clothed and equipped (PPE). Tow ropes and chains must be of adequate strength and attached to the towing tractor below the axle.
- **PA Equipment:** this may cause nuisance to households close to the event, care should be taken to keep noise to a minimum.
- **Safety Information:** Prominently displayed warning notices and signs; first aid sites clearly signed.
- **Toilets and Washing Facilities:** adequate provision for the expected number of visitors.
- **Vehicles:** provide sufficient parking for visitors' cars and horse boxes/trailers; limit the number of vehicles that can move around the site. It is advisable to have an officials car park.

**Depending on the size of the event it is always advisable to notify the police, fire service, ambulance, including air ambulance (who will need the OS Grid Reference) and local hospitals.**

## **Reporting of Injuries and Dangerous Occurrences (Oct 2013) to HSE and BHS**

There are certain incidents which you are required to report to the Health and Safety Executive.

- For England, Wales and Scotland, the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 apply. A report can be submitted online here: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/report.html>
- For Northern Ireland the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1997 apply. A report can be submitted online here: <http://www.hseni.gov.uk/contact-us/report-an-incident.htm>

### **Incidents that must be reported**

- Accidents to members of the public or others who are 'not at work' must be reported if they result in any injury and the person is taken directly from the scene of the accident to hospital for treatment to that injury. Examinations and diagnostic tests do not constitute 'treatment' in such circumstances.
- Injuries by an animal are reportable if the person is taken straight to hospital for treatment.

- Other sporting injuries are not reportable if the injury arose out of the normal participation of the activity. Injuries should be reported if they were due to defective equipment or failings in the organisation and management of an event.

Once an incident has been reported, you will receive a reference number as confirmation. This should be submitted to the BHS as part of the follow-up paperwork, and also kept for your records.

**BHS must also be notified of any RIDDOR reportable incidents on [access@bhs.org.uk](mailto:access@bhs.org.uk).**

It is recommended that any incident/accident or dangerous occurrence outside of the reportable incidents be documented at the time in order that if future reference is required an accurate record is available. Such records must be retained for three years from the date of incident. If involving a fatality or young person 17 years or under reports are kept indefinitely.

A written record should be made using HSE approved accident book and BHS Horse Fall reports/ accident reports forms and include written statements if appropriate and contact details for those involved including any witnesses.

Ensure that accident and incident forms are filled out and sent to BHS Access & Rights of Way Team.

**REMEMBER:** the event organiser is ultimately responsible for the Health and Safety of all those who attend an event and all reasonable precautions must be taken to ensure this. If the aforementioned points are considered and sensible steps taken to prevent accidents it is unlikely that you will encounter problems.

An Environment Health Officer may close the event at any time if they are dissatisfied with the way it is being run.

## Support and Guidance

If you have any queries regarding this guidance note, please contact the BHS Access & Rights of Way team in the first instance.

[access@bhs.org.uk](mailto:access@bhs.org.uk)