

# REIN

Riding Establishment Inspectors' Newsletter | *Spring 2024*



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

*Update on recent work and what's coming up*

Welcome to the 2024 edition of the Riding Establishment Inspectorate Newsletter (REIN). There has been a certain amount of chatter in the equestrian press this year about the inspection regime for licenced riding establishments and the burden of regulation on such businesses. As ever, there remains some confusion within the industry over licensing requirements and who is required to inspect what areas of an establishment and the costs of potential double inspecting. The Riding Establishments Subcommittee ('the Subcommittee') has worked to alleviate this and improve communication, both through contributing to equestrian media discussions and inviting representatives from across the industry to our annual meeting where we can collaboratively discuss and debate issues of concern. One of the areas of confusion remains around the role of local authority inspectors. To this end, Subcommittee members and contributors are involved

in rolling out a nationwide training programme for local authority inspectors to improve standards and consistency of riding establishment inspections. You can find further information about the training in this newsletter.

My huge thanks go to all the Subcommittee members and contributors (Anne, Ben, Bertie, Caroline, Carolyn, David, Rebecca and Sharon) who, as well as being active veterinary inspectors themselves, give generously of their time, energy and expertise to the work of the Subcommittee. We welcomed back Stephanie this year to manage the committee with ongoing input from Emma, Chloe and Lawrence, and my thanks to all of them for the way they work together to make the whole programme happen. My thanks also to Vicki who managed the committee in Stephanie's absence and remains part of the wider Standards & Advice Team at the RCVS.

We again delivered the Training and Induction Course for inspectors through updated online webinars and via the

RCVS Academy platform, which is an excellent and growing CPD resource for the profession. New inspectors attended the second iteration of our in-person training session held at the RDA National Training Centre. With a mixture of practical and theory sessions, there was plenty of opportunity for discussion and debate of many of the issues commonly encountered at inspections and feedback from delegates was very positive. Refreshers are also welcome to attend this course if they wish, at no extra cost. The annual Q&A training sessions were augmented for the first time this year with an "open to all" voluntary session for inspectors and this was well supported and generated useful discussions between Inspectors, all helping to ensure we maintain a high and consistent standard of veterinary inspection of riding establishments in England, Scotland and Wales.

*Linda Belton BVSc MRCVS, Chair of the Riding Establishments Sub-Committee (RESC)*

# FEEDBACK FROM THE 2023 AUDIT

Once again, many thanks to all of our veterinary inspectors whose reports were audited this year. We had a wide range of establishments to read about, providing hope that the riding industry is adapting well to the demands of public interest.

A gentle reminder that forms are available to download from the RCVS Riding Establishments webpage, and there

is a separate form for interim inspections (England only).

Here are a few key points we wanted to highlight:

- Diagnosing is a job for an establishment's own vet so if a problem is identified, then please refer them back to their regular vet.
- Ensure any issues identified are addressed in your written report to the

local authority.

- Do highlight whether the minimum standard has been met, or whether any minor failings of an administrative nature have been identified.
- Ensure that there is evidence of requirements such as dental checks, saddlery checks, BCS, etc.

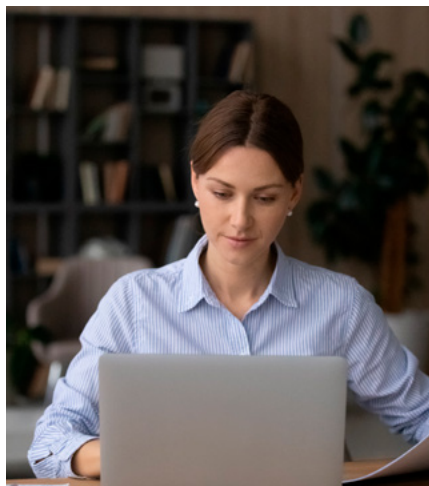
Thanks again for all your hard work inspecting throughout the last year.

## Riding establishments webpage - Document downloads

**A reminder that our webpage provides links to useful documents for licensing authorities and their inspectors.**

Documents available to download are as follows:

- Riding Establishment Inspectorate List
- Riding Establishment Inspector Application Form
- Riding Establishment Guidelines (Scotland and Wales)
- Riding Establishment Veterinary Inspector's Form (Scotland and Wales)
- Riding Establishment Guidelines (England)
- Riding Establishment Veterinary



Inspector's Form (England)

- Annual (Interim) Report Form (England)
- Template Form for New Horse(s)
- Template Notice to Withdraw Horse(s)
- Template Statement of Fitness to Return to Work
- Template Declaration of Veterinary Inspector's Interest
- Schedule of Horses Inspected

Please note that the webpage also provides information regarding the upcoming Training and Induction Courses, general information on licensing, a Q&A form and contact details for the Standards & Advice and Registration teams.

## Updates to Schedule of Horses Inspected form and inspector's form

We have at last been able to update the old Schedule of the Horses Inspected form, and the new version is now available for download from the RCVS Riding Establishment webpage.

It has been produced with valuable input from Subcommittee member Carolyn Madgwick and Subcommittee consultant Sharon Edwards, who are our Horse Trust representatives and are currently running an excellent series of training days for local authority inspectors. The hope is that it will be a universal form, adopted by both local authorities and veterinary inspectors. The view is that the form can be forwarded to you by the local authority in question in advance of a renewal inspection and with the ID

columns already filled in. For interim inspections, or where your particular local authority remains unwilling to come on board with this, there is no reason why this Schedule of the Horses Inspected form cannot be provided to the riding establishment for them to complete ahead of the inspection. However, we would still recommend cross checking the details against the relevant passport, especially for new arrivals whom you haven't inspected before - but it would certainly save significant time otherwise.

The actual Veterinary Inspector's Form (England) remains unchanged for now. We have every intention of updating it, which will include clarifying which sections should be covered by the veterinary

inspector and which by the local authority inspector, as we are fully aware this is an area of overlap that is creating issues for all involved. Unfortunately, there has been a delay from DEFRA in delivering a formal report following their review of The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 ('the Regulations'). The review itself was carried out last year, but the formal report has been delayed due to other issues arising. Once we have been notified of any changes to the Regulations, as is likely following the review, we will be in a position to update the veterinary Inspector's Form (England) in a properly informed way. We will, of course, notify you all when this has happened.

# Training and Induction Course update 2024

In line with the training offered in 2023, the 2024 Training and Induction Course will again be a combination of online and in-person training – we feel this is the best choice for delivery of a consistent inspection process across the UK.

## The training dates for 2024 are:

- Wednesday 15 May to Wednesday 12 June : All delegates to complete the compulsory online webinar series between these two dates.
- Wednesday 19 June: In-person training session at the RDA National Training Centre, Lowlands Farm, Shrewley, Warwickshire, CV35 7AX. This in-person training day is compulsory for new applicants and optional for refreshers.
- Friday 21 June 9:30 – 11:00am and Wednesday 26 June 2:00 – 3:30pm – Remote Q & A sessions for refreshers, if not attending the in-person training.

All delegates will need to complete the online webinar series by the 12 June deadline as the first step to meeting the course requirements. We estimate the webinar series will take approximately four hours to complete and the webinars can be accessed as required during the four-week window.

The RCVS Academy, which is hosting these courses, will record that the sessions have been viewed, and delegates will also be asked to certify that they have completed all the webinars.

The in-person training session will



consist of shadowing an inspection, several talks on common issues and pitfalls and a Q&A with the members of the Subcommittee present for the day.

After completion of the webinar series, refreshers will be required to attend a remote Q&A session or the in-person training session at the RDA National Training Centre. Please note that should numbers be an issue, preference will be given for new applicants to attend the in-person sessions.

The online Q&A sessions will focus on questions and issues raised by delegates, either in advance or on the day. Please note that there is now a Q&A form on the Riding Establishments webpage for questions to be raised.

**For further information about the course, you can contact Emma Cameron in the RCVS Registrations team on 020 7202 0780 or [e.cameron@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:e.cameron@rcvs.org.uk)**

## Annual Q&A sessions

The Subcommittee has reflected on the Annual Q&A sessions and agree that they have been useful and should continue to be run in the same format. We consider the functionality of putting a question in the chatbox during the session useful as, by the time that you reach the end of the presenter's spiel, sometimes one has almost forgotten the question or has to wait in the queue.

Throughout the year, the Subcommittee will continue to provide considered answers to queries sent into the College via the Standards and Advice Team email or using the new Q&A form on the RCVS Riding Establishments webpage. These queries will be discussed at the sessions in addition to any pre-submitted questions received and any questions that are

asked live during the session.

As we await the formal report following DEFRA's review of the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018, we are left with the current Regulations in England, with questions ranging from sensible, through the confusing, and some ludicrous. Our aim is to guide you through the maze, so keep asking!

# HIRING OUT HORSES TRAINING



The Horse Trust, in partnership with The Horse Trust, in partnership with Sharon Edwards, Consultant Senior Animal Health Inspector for City of London Trading Standards, has run a number of courses for local authority officers who inspect riding establishments under the Licensing of Activities Involving Animals Regulations in England over the last two years.

We are all well aware that equine knowledge and experience varies greatly across the local authorities, and often the local authority officer is one who inspects other licenced premises (for example gambling establishments or private hire vehicles) with very little understanding of the animals and their needs. Our aim was to provide an 'in-person' training day which utilises industry experts to provide information on all aspects of the inspection process, with the intention of improving the relationships between local authorities, veterinary inspectors and the licence holders.

Two courses ran in Autumn 2022, in Bucks and Shropshire, but it soon became clear that we needed more than a day to ensure we could cover everything to the level we wanted. In 2023 we added a half day 'virtual learning' ahead of the in-person day and ran four courses in Lancs, Kent, Norfolk and Somerset.

To date, 109 local authority officers have attended the course and two Defra officials from the animal licensing team. Further courses are planned for this summer and, while aimed at improving the knowledge of local authority officers, they are also relevant to veterinary inspectors and provide a useful opportunity to engage with the officers in the local area and challenge interpretations of the legislation.

**To register interest in a course, or for further information, email [training@horsetrust.org.uk](mailto:training@horsetrust.org.uk)**



Map detailing the location of trained officers to date

# FAQs

The Riding Establishments Subcommittee is here to help you in your role as inspectors. These are some answers to frequently asked questions that the Subcommittee has considered recently.

## **Q) How do I report concerns about a riding establishment?**

Where there are concerns about a particular riding establishment, we would advise that you contact the local authority and report your concerns directly to them, so that they can investigate the matter if necessary and, for example, arrange to undertake a spot inspection with a veterinary inspector.

Local authorities play an important role here given that riding establishments are required, by law, to be licenced by local authorities under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 and Riding Establishments Acts 1964 and 1970 for Scotland and Wales.

However, the licence may only be issued or denied by the local authority following an inspection and report by a veterinary surgeon who is a member of the RCVS Inspectorate.

## **Q) Can I appeal a decision made by a local authority regarding the licencing of a riding establishment?**

For an appeal against a star rating, the Local Authority Statutory Guidance recommends that it should be resolved via communication with the relevant officer and that, if a resolution cannot be found, then the riding establishment operator can appeal to the local authority, by making a representation in writing. This representation should then be considered by a different officer to the one who carried out the initial assessment and could potentially be referred to a senior manager or even to another local authority for consideration.

For an appeal against a refusal, revocation or variation of a licence, the local authority must notify the riding establishment operator of their rights of appeal when the refusal is made, or when the notice of variation or revocation is served. The appeal must be lodged within 28 days and to the first-tier tribunal (Civil Court). Further information about the first-tier tribunal can be found



here: <https://www.gov.uk/courts-tribunals/first-tier-tribunal-general-regulatory-chamber>

## **Q) When carrying out an inspection, is there a specific list of items that needs to be inspected by the vet inspector?**

The expectation is that a vet inspector carries out the inspection in line with what they feel is reasonably necessary to honour their professional obligations as a vet. This should include any areas regarding equine welfare. So far as the form is concerned, if they do omit any sections of the form, then the form should be annotated with explanations as to why.

## **Q) Who is allowed to declare a lame horse as fit to return to work?**

The short answer is that, in accordance with the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018, it must be a veterinary surgeon who signs a lame horse as fit to return to work. This would negate the opportunity for any person who is not a vet, including a non-MRCVS farrier, to sign a lame horse as fit to return to work.

On this matter, Schedule 5 of the regulations says: *'6(5) Any horse found on inspection to be in need of veterinary attention must not be returned to work until the licence holder has, at the licence holder's expense, obtained from and lodged with the local authority a veterinary certificate which confirms that the horse is fit for work.'*

Therefore, veterinary certification is specifically required.

## **Q) What is the current position**

## **regarding RDA riding schools and the need for licencing prior to hiring out horses for riding?**

The RCVS view is that any establishment that hires out horses for riding is required to be licensed under the legislation (the Riding Establishments Acts 1964 and 1970 in Scotland and Wales), and that this includes individual branches of the RDA. There is a need for licencing to apply to all organisations in the interests of animal welfare, and in our view raising charitable funds for riding falls within the remit of the legislation. That is, we consider taking individual 'donations' for each 'ride' to be payment in our opinion. In addition, we have had discussions with the RDA's national management in relation to this issue, and we know that their position is that all RDA branches should be licensed and inspected and that they are not exempt due to their charity status.

Ultimately, it is the local authority that enforces the legislation and decides whether an organisation requires a licence or not.

We specifically cover the issue of RDA riding schools not being exempt from the legislation in our refresher training sessions for inspectors, so the vet should be aware of this position if they are on our Riding Establishments Inspectorate List.

*The Subcommittee is happy to provide advice to veterinary inspectors. If you have questions, you can contact the RCVS Standards and Advice team on 020 7227 0789 or [advice@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:advice@rcvs.org.uk). Alternatively, you can use the Q&A form on our Riding Establishments webpage.*

# Perils and Pitfalls

## *It shouldn't happen to an inspector*

It is worth remembering that the annual inspection is similar to an annual MOT on a car. You have to make your mind up on one visit whether the establishment is fit to carry on operating for a further year, bearing in mind animal health and welfare and public safety.

You advise the local authority on whether this should happen and, of course, you can advise on any improvements that you may consider necessary.

There is a lot to consider, for example, buildings, electrics, fencing, grassland management, feed and water, saddlery, farriery, operational management, and more.

Some inspectors may argue that they are not an expert on fencing, electrics and so forth. However, this is not quite true because they should have had some grounding at university level via their veterinary degree and also have a great deal of experience of how horses are kept and used.

One way of going about the inspection is to consider the condition of the horse as the ultimate indicator of the quality of the establishment.

Your genuine expertise is the horse. Looking at the horse can tell you a good deal about how the establishment is run.

If you take saddlery as an example, the requirement is that the saddle fits the horse. Regulatory authorities may require that a saddler should check this out on a regular basis. However, the horse can change shape as it progresses through the seasons and so different saddles could be needed from time to time. Some establishments such as a trekking centre may also use a variety of numnahs to allow the same saddle to be used permanently.

In my experience, it is rare nowadays to see saddle sores or girth galls, but the earliest signs of a saddle not fitting are changes in the quality of hair under the saddle. Sometimes length, sometimes colour, or just a change in the quality of the coat. These slight changes are significant and should make you look carefully at the saddle structure and then how it fits.

It may well be that the establishment has a record of appropriate saddle fitting, but observation of the horse is far more important.



The same applies to farriery. There may be a record of farriery, but examination of the shoes will give you a good indication as to whether this is being handled well. A shoe should last roughly six weeks and a farrier will probably only shoe six-or-eight horses at a time, so you should expect to find a range of wear of shoes amongst the different horses, from new to almost worn out, as not all horses will wear out shoes at the same rate. However, you find all the shoes at the same wear, you might suspect they are all shod at the same time in a blitz. That is not the same as regular maintenance.

What I am trying to suggest is that if you take the animal as the ultimate consumer and your experienced eye suggests that all is not quite right, then you should become a biological detective and look for clues. Accident books and records of their own veterinary visits can be helpful.

Because you have a limited time to carry out an inspection, you may decide it is not feasible to walk the entire perimeter fencing, but if there are records of injury which suggest that there might be a problem, then maybe you should.

From your considerable equine experience, it should be obvious from the moment you enter the establishment whether the fabric of the place is good, poor, or indifferent. Your general view of the horses before you inspect them individually should give you an overall impression.

Then, as I say, you can work your way

through the inspection.

I think it is important to get an idea of what the establishment is doing and then whether the management is good enough. You may get a place where the licence holder is suitably qualified, but the premises is run by somebody else. Before making any judgement on such a problem, carry out the inspection as normal, and then report back to the local authority.

It is their problem to make that decision not yours. Remember though that your report will be available as public information so it should stick to the facts and your professional opinion and therefore avoid contentious comments!

Remember that your job is an inspection of the horse not a full blown clinical examination. You are there to decide whether a horse is suitable or not for the job in hand. Whilst there may be a temptation to get involved in diagnosis, any veterinary problems you may observe in a horse should be referred back to the premise's own vet.

Finally, I try to use the inspection as a way of getting improvements made to the establishment. Fixing some things, such as a muck heap in the wrong place, a door bolt missing, or stable floor repairs, can often be achieved by persuading the owner at the time of the visit, rather than getting heavy handed with the local authority.

I hope this may be of some help, I enjoy the craic of inspecting, I hope you do too.

*Dr Bertie Ellis MRCVS*

# Minor failings

## *The inspection found some minor failings*

The Regulations expect all businesses to meet and maintain the minimum standards set down in the Defra hiring out horses guidance, ([found here](#)). Where a veterinary inspector identifies that the premises does not meet the minimum standards, these must be noted on the inspection form, with an explanation that can be expanded on in the covering letter sent to the local authority alongside the inspection report.

If the inspection is for a new licensed premises and identifies some minor failings, the local authority cannot issue a licence.

New applicants must meet the minimum standards before a licence can be granted.

If on a renewal, annual or interim inspection minor failings are identified that compromise animal welfare, the local authority should not renew a licence, and if a licence is already in place it should be suspended, varied or revoked. If the minor failings do not compromise animal welfare the local authority can renew the licence, however the premise can only be given a 1-star, 1-year licence. The local authority must provide in writing to the licence holder a list of the minimum standards that it is

failing to meet and details of the appeals process.

The purpose of a 1-star licence is to give businesses the opportunity to address the minor failings. The licence holder can then apply for a reinspection if they make improvements to address the minor failings that were identified and, if found compliant, can have their star rating increased.

It is important to report any minor failings during the inspection on the report form to enable the local authority to address them with the licence holder and to provide a level standard of inspection across authorities.

## Clarification on terminology

**The Government Guidelines for licencing of riding establishments state “All horses must have a dental check at least once a year by a vet or someone qualified by the British Association of Equine Dental Technicians.”**

Sounds pretty straight forward? Maybe not so!

Dental procedures are divided into Category 1 and Category 2 procedures.

### Category 1 procedures are :

1. Examination of teeth.
2. Removal of sharp enamel points and dental overgrowths by hand floats only.
3. Removal of loose deciduous caps and calculus.
4. Bit Seating.

Category 1 procedures may be carried out by anyone irrespective of training,

qualifications, or insurance. In the past this has included individuals as various as the farrier, the local horse dealer and even the local farmer. However trusted these people are by the manager of the riding establishment ( who may have used them for years) they are not qualified and are not suitable under the legislation to carry out the required annual dental check of the riding establishments horses

Category 2 dental procedures are more complex procedures, such as assessment of dental arcades, motorised rasping, tooth removal and many other procedures. These can only be carried out by veterinary surgeons or by an equine dental technician (EDT) who has trained and passed an examination approved by Defra.

There are two organisations that have been approved by Defra to offer

the examination to qualify as an EDT. These are the British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) and the Worldwide Association of Equine Dentistry (WWAED).

EDTs who have the BEVA qualification are usually member of the British Association of Equine Dental Technicians (BAEDT). Members of both associations are bound by Codes of Conduct and Standards of Practice and are fully insured.

Whilst only BAEDT qualified technicians are stipulated in the government guidelines, the Subcommittee would suggest that WWAED technicians are also suitably qualified to provide dental care under the legislation.

The inspector should note the use of WWAED members and provide a brief explanation to the local authority as to suitability.

### Inspectorate query

To ascertain the spread of work amongst the Inspectorate, the Subcommittee has asked if inspectors can provide information on how many inspections they actually carried out in 2023. To provide this information, please email Stephanie by 10 June 2024 at [s.bruce-smith@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:s.bruce-smith@rcvs.org.uk)

### Live map of inspector registration

Our Registration team has created a link to a live map illustrating where veterinary Inspectors are currently registered, which can be accessed to identify areas which may be more sparse.

## Subcommittee member recruitment

The RCVS Riding Establishments Subcommittee, the body responsible for maintaining the list of Riding Establishment Inspectors and setting the standards for their admission and retention on the list, is currently seeking a new member. The Subcommittee, chaired by our Junior Vice-President Linda Belton, is looking for applicants who are current veterinary Riding Establishment Inspectors, familiar with trekking centres and seasonal establishments, with an interest in the regulations and their development and who want to play a role in governing the inspectorate. If you are interested in the role, please visit our [job vacancies webpage](#) to apply, or if you would like further information about what would be involved, please email Senior Standards & Advice Officer Stephanie Bruce-Smith on [s.bruce-smith@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:s.bruce-smith@rcvs.org.uk)