

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
**The Riding Establishments Acts
1964 and 1970**

**Guidelines for local authority riding
establishment inspectors**

Chapter	Contents	Page
Part 1	Introduction to the Riding Establishments Acts	3
Part 2	Licensing requirements	5
Part 3	Qualifications and suitability of the applicant	7
Part 4	RCVS approved riding establishments inspectorate list	9
Part 5	The inspection process	13
Part 6	Facilities, accommodation, and saddlery	16
Part 7	Health and safety, disease control, and first aid	20
Part 8	Variations of premises and other special considerations	21
Part 9	Summary of offences	24
Part 10	Other relevant legislation and guidance	25
Part 11	Inspection of working donkey premises	26
Part 12	Inspecting polo establishments	28

Part 1: Introduction to the Riding Establishments Acts

- 1.1 Under the Riding Establishments Acts 1964 and 1970 (RE Acts), riding establishments are required by law to be licensed by local authorities.
- 1.2 A licence may only be issued or denied by the local authority following an inspection and report by a veterinary surgeon. The inspection must only be carried out by a current member of the RCVS riding establishments inspectorate list (Inspectorate) (RE Act 1964 S. 2(3)).
- 1.3 A list of current members is available on the [RCVS riding establishments webpage](#)¹.
- 1.4 The RCVS Riding Establishments Subcommittee (RESC) is responsible for maintaining the Inspectorate, setting standards for admission and retention on the list, and for ensuring, as far as possible, a competent and uniform level of inspection.
- 1.5 The RESC has produced these guidelines to assist local authorities and their riding establishment inspectors in understanding how the RE Acts apply in practice.

Interpretation

- 1.6 The term 'riding establishment' means the carrying on of a business “...**of keeping horses to let them out on hire for riding, or for use in providing instruction in riding for payment, or both...**” (RE Act 1964 S.6 (1)).
- 1.7 'Horse' is defined as including, “...**any mare, gelding, pony, foal, colt, filly or stallion and also any ass, mule or jennet...**” (RE Act 1964 s.6 (4)).
- 1.8 In addition to horses and ponies in traditional riding schools, trail riding, orienteering, and trekking have become popular, and establishments offering these activities require a licence. The running of beach ponies and donkeys, instruction in playing polo (other than on the pupil's own horse) and the hiring of horses for hacking and hunting also require a licence. There is further information on these special considerations in Part 8 below.
- 1.9 Inspection of premises is required for:
 - a. previously licensed riding establishments;
 - b. riding establishments, which have a three-month provisional licence;
 - c. new applications for licensing;
 - d. any premises where there is reason to believe a person is running a riding establishment as defined above.
- 1.10 The fourth category may be visited initially by a veterinary inspector appointed by the local authority, or by a local authority officer, to determine whether licensing is necessary. Any local authority officer undertaking such an investigation should have a sound knowledge of horses and their management or should be accompanied by a veterinary surgeon on the Inspectorate.

¹ rcvs.org.uk/veterinary-professionals/conduct-and-guidance/rcvs-riding-establishment-inspections

- 1.11 Only current members of the Inspectorate are authorised to advise the local authority as to the licensing of a riding establishment.
- 1.12 When an inspection is made for licensing, ideally the veterinary inspector should be accompanied by a local authority official.

Exceptions to the rule

- 1.13 The following do not fall within the definition of keeping a riding establishment within the meaning of the RE Acts:
- a. A business premises where the horses employed for the purposes of the business are kept by, or under, the management of the Secretary of State for Defence;
 - b. The carrying on of such a business if solely for police purposes;
 - c. The carrying on of such a business by the Zoological Society of London or by the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland;
 - d. The keeping of horses by universities for the instruction of students on courses qualifying for membership of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

Carriage driving/pony and trap lessons

- 1.14 Please note that the RE Acts only apply to ridden horses; they do not apply to activities such as carriage driving lessons.
- 1.15 The position of hired driving horses is an anomaly. The RE Acts apply to horses for hire and instruction in riding; not driving. However, over the years, we are aware that some local authorities have taken the view that unless they are Hackney Carriages, it is better on animal welfare terms that they are inspected. The RESC has not taken issue with local authorities who choose to adopt this pragmatic approach on animal welfare grounds.

Right of entry to premises

- 1.16 The RE Act 1964 empowers the local authority to instruct its veterinary inspector/officer to enter premises where it is believed a person may be keeping a riding establishment or one which is licensed “**at all reasonable times**” (RE Act 1964 S.2(2)) and inspect the premises, and any horses thereon.
- 1.17 It is an offence under the RE Act for any person to deny access to such premises to a duly authorised officer.

Part 2: Licensing requirements

- 2.1 A licence is granted annually by the local authority following an application. The applicant must be 18 years of age or over, or a body corporate. The licence fee is decided by the local authority in accordance with Section 35, Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act 1974. The licence is issued by the local authority after it has considered the report from its veterinary inspector.
- 2.2 Following an inspection, if it is recommended that a licence is issued, but certain improvements must be carried out by the licence holder, a follow-up visit should be made to ensure that the improvements have been made. It is best practice for the follow-up to a provisional licence (see below), prior to further licensing, be done by a member of the Inspectorate and this may be required by some local authorities.

Provisional licences

- 2.3 The RE Act 1970 allows a local authority to give a provisional licence where considerable improvements to the premises are required before a full licence can be awarded.

“In any case in which application is made under the principal Act to a local authority for a licence to keep a riding establishment and the local authority are not satisfied that having regard to all the circumstances they would be justified in granting such licence they may grant a provisional licence that will come into force at the beginning of the day on which it is granted and shall remain in force for three months” (RE Act 1970 S.1 (1))

- 2.4 The provisional licence can specify conditions, and the licensing authority will normally only grant a full licence when these conditions have been satisfied. The granting of a provisional licence is, in the first instance, for a period of three months.
- 2.5 A second provisional licence may be given for a further three months but no more than two may be granted in any 12-month period. Care must be taken to ensure that riding establishments that are only open during the summer months, such as trekking yards, do not try to exist permanently on provisional licences.
- 2.6 When such conditions are imposed, it is important that **subsequent inspections are carried out by the same inspector** so that there is continuity in the reports to be considered by the local authority. Veterinary inspectors should consult with the local authority officer to agree a detailed procedure.
- 2.7 It is desirable that licensing authorities accept professional advice on matters involving seeking an expert or second opinion in cases of doubt or difficulty.
- 2.8 Inspectors should be aware that owners are allowed to appeal against the decision of a local authority to refuse a licence. Such cases are heard before magistrates who are often reluctant to take action to remove a person's means of livelihood but may well agree to the imposition of improved conditions.

Planning permission

- 2.9 Before consideration is given to the granting of a licence to a new applicant, the local authority should ascertain that the applicant has obtained planning permission under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, (a) to use the premises as a riding establishment, and either (b) to erect new stables or other buildings on the site, or (c) has obtained permission for change of use of all, or part, of the premises if either all, or part, of a premises is to be used as a riding establishment.

Insurance

- 2.10 The RE Act 1970 specifies that the licence holder shall hold a current public liability insurance policy to provide indemnity against liability at law to pay damages for accidental bodily injury or damage to property to those hiring a horse for riding or receiving instruction in riding resulting from their own activities or those of members of their staff or of their clients in connection with their business (RE 1970 Act S.2 (4A)).

Part 3: Qualifications and suitability of the applicant

- 3.1 An inspector is required to consider the suitability of the applicant as to their experience in the management and care of horses and their ability to supervise the establishment, “**either by experience in the management of horses, or by being the holder of an approved certificate or by employing in the management of the riding establishment a person so qualified, to be the holder of such a licence**” (1970 Act S.2 (ii)(4)(a)).
- 3.2 Vocational qualifications are regulated by sector skills councils, and, for the equestrian industry, the relevant council is LANTRA. LANTRA determines national occupational standards for its industries and ensures that related vocational certified qualifications are relevant and at an appropriate standard.
- 3.3 Both the British Horse Society (BHS) grant recognised qualifications to suitable candidates, with the BHSAI (or equivalent) generally accepted as being the necessary minimum level. Other relevant qualifications include Equestrian Tourism Qualifications Ride Leader at appropriate level or Equestrian Tourism Qualifications Centre Manager. It is generally held that the certified qualifications should cover a basic standard in practical horse husbandry. Whilst an applicant may present a theory-based qualification as evidence of suitability, these are not likely to be sufficient evidence of suitability in isolation if they have little practical content.
- 3.4 Other equine qualifications such as college diplomas and NVQs may be taken into consideration as proving the suitability of an applicant or manager. The following are considered minimal and equivalent to the above qualifications:
- At least an NVQ Level 3 in Horse Care and Management.
 - At least a BTEC Level 3 National Diplomas in Horse Management offered by Edexcel.
 - At least a Level 3 National (Advanced National) Certificate in Management of Horses offered by City & Guilds.
 - At least a British Horse Society Assistant Instructor Certificate (BHSAI).
 - British Equestrian Tourism Ride Leader Qualification.
 - British Equestrian Tourism Riding Holiday Centre Manager Qualification.
- 3.5 The above list is not exhaustive and may grow as other qualifying training courses and examinations become recognised. If you are unsure as to an applicant's suitability, contact the RESC for advice.
- 3.6 Association of British Riding Schools (ABRS) tests are not currently recognised by LANTRA.
- 3.7 If a new applicant has no recognised qualifications and is relying on practical experience the local authority should obtain references to support the application, and the inspector should assess them. A CV should be requested to ascertain previous relevant responsibilities held by the applicant, in addition to a professional reference from a veterinary surgeon or farrier, and the inspector should keep in mind that the object of the RE Acts is to ensure adequate minimum standards of management.

- 3.8 If the management of a riding establishment is to be entrusted to another person by the applicant (such as a manager), the suitability and experience of the manager must also be considered and reported upon.
- 3.9 The principal Act provides that a licence will not be granted to a person disqualified under the Act or five other specific Acts for the protection of animals. Provision is made for appeal to a magistrate's court on the refusal of a licence or any condition subject to which a licence is proposed to be granted.
- 3.10 A copy of these guidelines should be sent by the local authority to all new applicants.

Supervision

- 3.11 The RE Act 1970 requires that horses let out on hire must be supervised by a person 16 years of age or over, unless the licence holder is satisfied that the hirer is competent to ride without supervision.
- 3.12 The RE Act 1970 provides that "no horse will be let out on hire for riding or used for providing instruction in riding without supervision by a responsible person of the age of 16 years or over unless (in the case of a horse let out for hire for riding) the holder of the licence is satisfied that the hirer of the horse is competent to ride without supervision. The carrying on of a business of a riding establishment shall at no time be left in the charge of any person under 16 years of age" (1970 Act S.2 (4A)).
- 3.13 The inspector shall satisfy themselves as far as possible that the management of the business is not left under the supervision of a person under 16 years of age.

Part 4: RCVS approved riding establishments inspectorate list

- 4.1 A veterinary surgeon wishing to become an RCVS approved riding establishments inspector should send their application to the RCVS Registration Team - registration@rcvs.org.uk.

Eligibility criteria

- 4.2 Certain criteria must be met and maintained for admission to and continued inclusion of a veterinary surgeon on the riding establishments inspectorate list (the Inspectorate):
- a. Veterinary surgeons must maintain "UK practising" registration status with the RCVS.
 - b. Veterinary surgeons must be physically fit to practise, with five years' minimum post registration experience as MRCVS.
 - c. Veterinary surgeons must meet the *Code of Professional Conduct* obligation to keep within their own area of competence and refer cases responsibly.
 - d. Veterinary surgeons must have professional indemnity insurance.
 - e. Veterinary surgeons must attend an approved refresher course every 5 years.
 - f. An average of 10 hours per week of equine work (which may include inspections) is required as a minimum. In exceptional circumstances, variations will be considered by the RESC, for example, in relation to applicants in remote or urban areas.
- 4.3 All new applicants must attend a training and induction course and shadow an inspector who is also a RESC member. If the requirement to shadow is not met at a training and induction course, an individual shadowing session will need to be carried out with a member of the RESC before admission to the Inspectorate.
- 4.4 Applications are scrutinised by the RESC for approval before admission to the Inspectorate.
- 4.5 Inspectors must declare that they meet the eligibility criteria at the end of the webinar series of each induction and refresher course.

Induction and refresher courses

- 4.6 All courses are run by the RESC.
- 4.7 Inspectors must attend a refresher course every 5 years and will be notified by the RCVS' Registration Team when they are due to attend the next refresher course.
- 4.8 Unless dispensation is agreed in advance, failure to attend a refresher course will normally result in the inspector being removed from the Inspectorate for no longer meeting the eligibility criteria (see paragraph 4.9 and 4.10 below, in relation to removal of an inspector and disputing a decision of the RESC).

Removal of an inspector

- 4.9 The RESC may remove an inspector from the Inspectorate where:
- a. As per paragraph 4.8 above, the inspector has failed to attend a refresher course, and dispensation has not been agreed in advance.
 - b. Upon receiving an application for a refresher course, it becomes apparent that the inspector no longer meets the eligibility criteria.
 - c. The RESC considers that an audited inspector's report(s) or inspection(s) fall below an acceptable standard, and the inspector has failed to make timely improvements following audit feedback.
 - d. The RESC decides, for any other reason, that removal is appropriate and can be justified.

Disputing a decision of the RESC

- 4.10 Applicants and inspectors may ask the RESC to review decisions where:
- a. Their application to join the Inspectorate has been rejected and the applicant disagrees with the decision.
 - b. The inspector has been informed of the RESC's decision to remove them from the Inspectorate, and the inspector disagrees with the decision.
- 4.11 To be eligible for a review, applicants and inspectors must notify the RESC that they disagree with the relevant decision within 14 days of the decision being communicated to the applicant or inspector. Reasons for disagreement, together with any supporting documents, must then be provided in writing within six weeks of the relevant decision being communicated to the applicant or inspector.
- 4.12 A panel of RESC members not involved in the initial decision, or the Chair, will review the decision as soon as is practicable thereafter and either:
- a. Change the decision; or
 - b. Confirm the earlier decision.
- 4.13 If the applicant or inspector disagrees with the outcome of the review, the matter will be referred for consideration by the Standards Committee at its next available meeting.
- 4.14 All decisions made by the Standards Committee will be final.

Conflict of interest

- 4.15 An inspector should not carry out an inspection where there is a real or perceived conflict of interest, for example, where the riding establishment is an existing client of the inspector's practice.
- 4.16 In such cases, the inspector should notify the local authority of the conflict and suggest an alternative inspector from the Inspectorate.
- 4.17 In exceptional circumstances, for example, where the local authority has been unable to secure an alternative inspector, with the local authority's approval, the inspector may proceed.
- 4.18 Before doing so, the inspector should also check that the riding establishment is content to proceed.
- 4.19 If so, the template conflict of interest declaration form available on the RCVS riding establishments webpage should be used. Once signed, a copy should be retained by the inspector before being sent to the local authority with the remainder of the inspection documents. The riding establishment should also be sent a copy for its records.

Payment of inspectors

- 4.20 To avoid potential conflicts of interest, and as local authorities have a legal responsibility for ensuring that only suitable premises are licensed, inspectors should be selected and paid by the local authority.
- 4.21 The RESC has agreed to recommend that the normal hourly rate of the veterinary practice should be charged, including the time taken for preparing the report. It accepts that there will be geographical variations in charging rates.

Veterinary inspector's form

- 4.22 Licensing authorities and their inspectors are advised to use the veterinary inspector's form, which is available on the RCVS riding establishments webpage.
- 4.23 This form may be completed online for subsequent transmission or storage, although a check should be made with the local authority as to whether online submission is acceptable. A copy of the application form should be sent to the inspector concerned so that they are familiar with the type of premises and the number of animals to be inspected.
- 4.24 Upon completion of the inspection, the form should be returned by the inspector to a **named individual** at the local authority. Where any recommendations or adverse comments are made on the report form by the inspector, a letter to the local authority should accompany the form outlining the inspector's concerns, giving full details and the inspector's recommended course of action.

Annual audit of inspectors reports

- 4.25 Individual inspectors are selected at random annually to request that copies of their inspectors' reports be provided to be audited by the RESC. Inspectors are notified on their inspector application form that as an inspector they may be required to participate in the audit scheme.
- 4.26 Where appropriate, the RESC will provide individual feedback to inspectors or general feedback via the REIN newsletter.
- 4.27 Action may be taken by the RESC as per paragraph 4.9 above, where reports do not meet the required standard.

Part 5: The inspection process

- 5.1 The inspector is required to inspect the horses and the premises to assess the operation of the riding establishment. They will advise the local authority on the type of equine activities carried out by the riding establishment and the standard to which they are performed. This can vary from teaching people to ride in confined areas, to the hiring of horses for riding with or without supervision, and includes beach donkeys, trekking centres, and orienteering.
- 5.2 The local authority should be encouraged to have an officer present at the inspection. In this way, small problems can quickly be sorted out, and larger ones will be more readily understood by the local authority.
- 5.3 The inspector should visit the riding establishment at a reasonable time when all the horses are likely to be at the stables, having previously made an appointment convenient to all parties. The time of year when an inspection is carried out should relate to the use of the animals. Pony trekking centres should be inspected during the trekking season when the animals are in full use. The inspection of any riding establishment that is carried out at the beginning or end of the season is of little value in determining the standard of care and management of such animals.
- 5.4 The daybook/diary/appointments book must be inspected to assess the workloads of the horses.

The horses and ponies

- 5.5 All horses and ponies in the premises may be inspected at the discretion of the inspector. All horses that are used in the riding establishment for teaching, hire, and demonstration purposes **must** be examined. There should be a register of horses aged three years, and under which should be seen and signed by the inspector.
- 5.6 The horses must be, and as far as can be judged, continue to be maintained in good health. This is not always easy to ascertain at the first inspection but a general assessment of the riding establishment, the state of the buildings, the saddlery, and the record keeping etc., will be good indicators of the standards of the riding establishment.
- 5.7 The inspector will certify that every horse and pony presented to them comes within the terms of the RE Acts. They must list them including age, short description, and their general condition, including feet (noting if shod). The shoeing book may be inspected, or the owner/manager carefully questioned as to the frequency of shoeing.

Restrictions on use

- 5.8 The inspector should note for each horse inspected what restrictions (if any) are required to be placed on the use of that animal. This would be expected to apply particularly to smaller animals, older or young/inexperienced animals, unshod animals, and any with a medical condition which might limit their ability to perform the tasks required. Any restrictions should be noted, with a copy sent to both the riding establishment and the local authority.

- 5.9 Mares heavily in foal, and for three months after foaling, and all animals three years and under are not allowed to be used. The latter is defined as a horse whose lower permanent lateral incisor teeth have not yet erupted (see list of offences below). A register of all animals three years and under is required to be kept (RE Act 1970 S.2 (1) (ii) (4A) (e)).
- 5.10 Horses at part livery and working livery of which the riding establishment has limited use, and any animal used for providing instruction in riding for payment, whether owned by the riding establishment or not, are within the provisions of the RE Acts. This includes escort horses and horses kept in the stables at full livery should be noted.
- 5.11 **Section 1(3) of the principle Act authorises the inspection of any horse or anything found on the premises if the inspector deems it to be necessary, even if it does not fall within the terms of the RE Acts.**

Condition of horses, including abnormalities

- 5.12 ***RE Act 1970 S2 (1) (ii)(4)(b)(i): "That paramount consideration will be given to the condition of the horses and that they will be maintained in good health and in all respects physically fit, and that in the case of a horse kept for the purpose of its being let out on hire for riding or for a horse kept for the purpose of its being used in providing instruction in riding the horse will be suitable for the purpose for which it is kept".***
- 5.13 Every horse should be brought out of its stable into good light, the description noted for future identification, and the animal walked and trotted on a hard level surface. Its age must be checked, and a careful inspection must be made for sores and galls from its tack, as well as any other injuries. Any injuries found must be noted and their significance assessed.
- 5.14 Each animal should be seen tacked up at some stage during the inspection.
- 5.15 The clinical inspection of each horse should include auscultation of the chest whilst at rest, plus an ophthalmoscopic assessment of both eyes.
- 5.16 Attention must be paid to the state of the feet, which should be properly trimmed, and to the shoes if shod. This should be noted, as well as any badly worn, cast or loose shoes (RE Act 1970 S.2(1)(ii)(4)(b)(ii)).
- 5.17 When abnormalities are found they must be assessed in respect of the animal's welfare and the safety of its rider. The abnormality must be noted, and a decision must be made immediately as to whether the animal should continue to be used. The owner or their agent should also be informed immediately.
- 5.18 In such cases, the inspector should not attempt to make a diagnosis or suggest treatment but should inform the owner or manager that the horse must be seen by their own veterinary surgeon.

- 5.19 If a horse is found to need veterinary attention it must be removed from work by a verbal order that must be confirmed in writing as soon as possible at or after the inspection. Any such animal may only be returned to work when the owner has obtained, at their own expense, a veterinary certificate stating that the horse is fit for work.
- 5.20 Where horses are declared by the owner as not in work because of lameness, illness, or injury, the inspector must also be satisfied that the appropriate treatment is being carried out (RE Act 1970 S.2(1)(ii)(4A)(a)).

Dealing with new horses introduced into the riding establishment

- 5.21 The RE Acts do not impose any specific conditions or requirements for inspection of new horses between licences.
- 5.22 Where individual horses are concerned, it has become common practice for many local authorities to ask for a certificate from the riding establishment's own veterinary surgeon indicating that a new horse is fit to join the school (for example, that the horse is not lame, does not have heart or eye problems and is suitable for use). While this approach is not specifically provided for in the RE Acts, it is fairly common practice and is a pragmatic and useful compromise.
- 5.23 Although not specifically covered in the RE Acts, a reinspection is advisable where there is a major change in horses. For example, where a new riding establishment is established and most of the horses arrive after the initial inspection. In any event, this is often covered by the provisional licence arrangements with the horses being seen at a subsequent inspection leading to a full licence.
- 5.24 In all cases, the local authority should be informed about any changes in the horses at a riding establishment.

Part 6: Facilities, accommodation, and saddlery

General

- 6.1 The RE Act 1970 S2(1)(ii)(b)(viii) states that, "...adequate accommodation will be provided for forage, bedding, stable equipment and saddlery."
- 6.2 The supply of food, drink, and bedding material must be adequate and suitable. The hay and food shall not be mouldy, or rat infested. Hard feed should be stored in vermin-proof containers. When inspecting these, the inspector must satisfy themselves that all are sufficient for the animals in the riding establishment, with a reasonable reserve. It must be borne in mind that some riding establishments prefer to have frequent deliveries of foodstuffs, rather than store large quantities.
- 6.3 The amending Act requires that the horses be adequately exercised, groomed, rested, and visited at suitable intervals. By inquiry and examination of the stable records and appointment book, (which it is desirable should be kept in permanent form), the inspector must be satisfied on these points.

Accommodation

- 6.4 **The principal Act requires a riding establishment to have accommodation suitable for its horses and ponies in respect of construction and size, number of occupants, light, ventilation, and drainage. Specific recommendations are made in the Equine Codes and should be complied with.**
- 6.5 Construction should be substantial, adequate to contain the animal and should provide warmth and shelter in clean hygienic conditions. Access to boxes and stalls should be safe and convenient. Stalls shall be large enough to allow the animal to lie down and get up without risk of injury. Boxes shall be large enough to allow the animal to turn around and there should be sufficient headroom, with a minimum allowing a horse to hold its head in a normal upright position without its ears touching the roof. Both shall be free of fittings and projections or other structural features that might cause injury to equine occupants. Doors must open outwards, be of robust construction, and of such a height as to allow the animal to look out.
- 6.6 The amending Act requires that buildings converted for use as stabling must comply with all the requirements of the principal Act. Cowsheds, pig sties, and other agricultural buildings are not usually suitable without significant modification.
- 6.7 Consideration should be given to the number of horses kept at a riding establishment, including animals at livery, in relation to the buildings and land that are available. It would generally be accepted that it should be possible to bring all horses under cover should the need arise.
- 6.8 **If appropriate, a licence may impose a condition that no more than a specified number of horses of all categories should be kept on the premises.**
- 6.9 Lighting must be adequate to render the use of artificial light unnecessary during daylight hours. Horses must be protected from injury from windows, electric switches, loose wires, and other

equipment in stalls and boxes. If an inspector is in any doubt about the safety of electrical equipment they must report this to the local authority and request in writing that the installation is checked by a qualified electrician.

- 6.10 In the absence of mains electricity adequate alternative lighting should be readily available.
- 6.11 Ventilation should provide regular air changes without significant draughts
- 6.12 Drainage must be adequate to carry away liquid voided by the horses and keep the floors or bedding dry. Drains shall discharge outside the buildings. There must be provision for the storage and disposal of manure and spoiled bedding, and this must be located sufficiently far from buildings to avoid the risk of fire and the spread of disease.
- 6.13 Many of the problems at riding establishments are related to the buildings. This is easy to deal with when a potential riding establishment is being inspected for the first time. Either a licence is refused until improvements are made or, if changes of a more minor nature are required, a provisional licence is recommended while the required improvements are completed. Where there has been a gradual deterioration in a premises, the same system may be used to bring it up to an acceptable standard. Improvements must be made during the period of one or two provisional licences for a full license to be restored.
- 6.14 The introduction of the Animal Welfare Acts in 2006 has given increased urgency to the provision of a suitable environment for all animals, and improvements may be suggested on this basis.

Notices

- 6.15 The name, address, and telephone numbers (preferably including a mobile telephone number) of the licence holder or other responsible person must be displayed prominently and clearly on the outside of the premises. The post code should also be displayed on the notice to help the emergency services locate the property in the event of a fire.
- 6.16 This notice is particularly important at premises at which no one lives permanently, or which are left unattended for long periods of the day.
- 6.17 The notice should include clear instructions as to what to do in the event of a fire. It should be in a prominent place and large enough to be easily read from a distance. The small plastic notices which have been available from some equine societies may satisfy the letter of the law but not its intention and should be discouraged as inadequate.
- 6.18 Prominent "No smoking" notices must be present in all areas of the premises.

Grazing

- 6.19 Please note that grazing is not required for a licence to be granted.
- 6.20 The amending Act requires that horses maintained at grass must always have water and shelter, as well as adequate pasture. They should also receive supplementary feed, if necessary, either

when in work or during the cold winter months. The supplementary feed requirement will depend on the type and age of the animal, its workload and the pasture provided. Warmblood types, such as TBs and Arabs, may need stabling as well as additional feed during winter. Turnout rugs will provide some extra protection from the elements; such fittings should be checked daily and the rug removed at least twice a week to ensure that the animal is clean and dry underneath. Cold blooded types, such as native ponies and cobs, are hardier and can usually overwinter at grass provided there is shelter available and supplementary feeding given where necessary.

- 6.21 Fences must be maintained in a safe condition, free from hazards, and loose or broken rails. Barbed wire is not generally regarded as suitable for horses, although it may be acceptable as a boundary fence on large acreages providing it is maintained properly. Fields should be free of rubbish, parked machinery, and other equipment likely to cause injury to horses. There must be control of injurious weeds including ragwort.
- 6.22 Horses at grass must be visited twice daily by a person competent to recognise injury or illness, and with the authority to take the necessary action if required.
- 6.23 It is generally recommended that a minimum of one acre per horse is required with two acres per horse being necessary if outdoor exercise areas are provided, and hay or haylage is to be produced. Where riding establishments do not have access to the recommended acreage, inspectors should ascertain how the horses' exercise requirements are to be met, and how waste disposal is to be managed.
- 6.24 More specific guidance regarding grazing is provided in the Equine Codes of Practice.

Indoor and outdoor schools

- 6.25 The surface of the school should be well drained, free of standing water, and maintained regularly to keep it level and smooth. It should have the degree of 'give' consistent with the nature of the surface material of which it is composed.
- 6.26 Indoor schools should ideally have no central roof stanchions. All stanchions around the walls must be either outside of the innermost protecting wall or well-padded up to a height above the head of a rider on the tallest horse used in the riding establishment. Central stanchions, if absolutely necessary, should be similarly padded. There should be no other projections, either around the walls or elsewhere in the school, that could cause injury to horse or rider.
- 6.27 Outdoor schools should be properly fenced and maintained so as not to cause injury to horse or rider. Lighting stanchions must be properly padded (as above) if they are sufficiently close to the riding surface to present a danger of contact.
- 6.28 Indoor schools should have functional doors, and outdoor schools must be able to be closed off by gates or rails when in use.
- 6.29 Any jumping or similar equipment should be maintained in a good state of repair and should be stored out of the school when not in use.

Saddlery

- 6.30 The principal Act requires that riding equipment shall be maintained in a good condition so as not to cause suffering to the horse or accident to the rider.
- 6.31 Inspection of saddlery shall be carried out in a good light. It will normally be fitted on the animals for which it is intended, to ensure that a correct fit can be established, with particular attention being given to the condition of the leather (or synthetic material), buckles, stitching and padding and to the degree of wear on bits. Leather should not be dry and should not crack when fully bent. Any article of saddlery deemed to be in poor condition must be taken out of use immediately and noted in the report.
- 6.32 The following are some of the items that are unacceptable in a riding establishment. Saddles with broken trees, nickel stirrups, stirrups with worn or smooth treads, worn and dirty girths, numnahs, or saddle cloths that are dirty or are used to try to improve the fit of a badly fitting saddle. Some bits, such as a running gag, may be considered unsuitable for use on horses that are used for teaching purposes.

Riding hats

- 6.33 The availability of riding hats should be ascertained and their overall appearance assessed. However, any further examination of hats and other riding apparel is a health and safety issue and is the joint responsibility of the proprietor of the riding establishment and the local authority. The inspector is not equipped to detect fine cracks in the structure of hats that may render them unserviceable and therefore should not give the impression that hats have 'passed' the inspection. In general, riding hats should have the current British Standard mark.
- 6.34 The British Horse Society (BHS) 2016 Riding Hat Standards document is attached at [Annex A](#). This includes Q&As for approved centres, registered instructors, and BHS members.

Part 7: Health and safety, disease control, and first aid

Disease control

- 7.1 RE Act 1970 S.2(1)(ii)(b)(vi) states that, "...all reasonable precautions will be taken to prevent and control the spread among horses of infectious or contagious diseases and that veterinary first aid equipment and medicines shall be provided and maintained in the premises."
- 7.2 The RE Acts require that reasonable precautions are taken against the spread of infectious disease and veterinary first aid equipment must be maintained on the premises in a clean state in a place set aside for that purpose. So far as possible, the inspector must be satisfied that there is provision for the isolation of any animal with an infectious disease.
- 7.3 First aid equipment may include antiseptic products, dressings, bandages, scissors, and a thermometer. It is strongly advised that the name, address, and telephone number of the attending veterinary surgeon and doctor be prominently displayed at each riding establishment in case of emergency. Medicines should be stored appropriately.
- 7.4 Adequate alternative lighting should be readily available for veterinary examinations or simple first aid treatments.
- 7.5 The vaccination of animals against equine disease in a riding establishment should be recommended by the veterinary inspector, but it cannot, under the RE Acts, be made mandatory.
- 7.6 Parasite control measures should be discussed and records checked.

Horse passports

- 7.7 The RE Acts do not require horse passports to be checked. However, the inspector should make reasonable enquiries to satisfy themselves that horses in the riding establishment are in possession of valid passports and make a record of this. It is also recommended that a sample of passports are checked to ensure reasonable compliance such as that horses may be medicated lawfully.

Fire precautions

- 7.8 RE Act 1970 S.2(1)(ii)(b)(vii) states that, "...appropriate steps will be taken for the protection and extrication of horses in case of fire and, in particular, that the name, address and telephone number of the licence holder or some other responsible person will be kept displayed in a prominent position on the outside of the premises and that instructions as to action to be taken in the event of fire, with particular regard to the extrication of horses, will be kept displayed in a prominent position on the outside of the premises."
- 7.9 Owners, managers, and staff must be made aware that their primary duty in the event of a fire is to call the fire brigade, extract the horses, and attend to the safety of people. Firefighting is dangerous and should be left to the professionals. For small, isolated fires, a water tap and hose

may be adequate. Fire extinguishers should be serviced annually, and the last service date must be visible on an attached label.

- 7.10 There must be clear access to all stalls and loose boxes to allow for emergency evacuation. A suitable holding area away from the buildings where animals may be temporarily contained should be identified and staff instructed accordingly.
- 7.11 The amending Act requires that the name, address, and telephone number of the licence holder or other responsible person, with directions for action in case of fire, particularly with regard to the extrication of horses, must be displayed prominently on the outside of the premises.
- 7.12 All stables must comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 or the Fire Safety (Scotland) Order 2009. A fire risk assessment must be carried out and a pre-incident planning form logged with the local fire service. An inspector should check that the riding establishment has complied with this requirement but need not concern themselves with the details. If an inspector finds that the riding establishment has not completed a fire risk assessment, they should notify the local authority.

Health and safety assessments

- 7.13 The veterinary inspector should ask to see the stables' health and safety assessment. If one is not available, the proprietor should be reminded of the need for one in order to comply with the terms of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, although the enforcement of this lies with the local authority.

Part 8: Variations of premises and special considerations

- 8.1 Apart from the standard riding school premises, other centres of horse activity which come within the scope of the RE Acts present the inspector with special considerations. These include:
- a. Trail riding - guided and unguided riding schools with attached trekking riding schools with livery.
 - b. Centres requiring an Adventure Activity Licence.
 - c. Centres and individuals hiring hunters and hacks.
 - d. Centres teaching polo using hired horses.
 - e. Pony parties, where ponies are being hired for riding or for use in providing instruction in riding for payment.
 - f. Beach ponies and donkeys.
- 8.2 These establishments should normally be inspected during their operating season and should comply with the normal requirements of the RE Acts in so far as they apply. Where it is impossible to inspect all premises, a representative sample must be inspected.
- 8.3 It is important to give the local authority a concise idea of how the centre operates, and to consider whether the operators are competent to run what may be extensive riding, where control of the health and safety of the rider and horse may be from a distance.
- 8.4 In these cases, it is useful to see a risk assessment of the centre that will give the inspector some idea of how things are run.

Trekking centres

- 8.5 As a general rule, horses and ponies in purely trekking centres are so used to the pattern and familiarity of rides that the inexperienced rider can rely on the horse to carry them safely.

Hacking

- 8.6 This is the next stage upwards in horsemanship from conventional lessons or trekking, where the rider is expected to be able to control the horse competently and independently.
- 8.7 The inspector must be satisfied that the operator is able to gauge the skill level of the rider for the appropriate horse.

Trail riding

- 8.8 The horses travel over greater distances than the previous two types of operation, often staying away overnight, and may cover 80-100 miles in a week. This requires a more skilled rider, and better supervision by the operator, especially with regard to accidents and emergencies.
- 8.9 Any horse that becomes lame or sick is normally replaced under the supervision of the operator during the trail ride, and provision for this must be made.
- 8.10 The horses can find this type of work physically demanding and distances over 12-15 miles per

day can be a problem, particularly for young horses. Most centres offering this type of riding will give the horse one week off for every week on.

- 8.11 The most adventurous of this type is unguided, with the rider left to their own devices with maps and a rendezvous. It is essential that the inspector is satisfied that adequate control and management is in place to cover any eventuality. For example, all riders are checked in at night by phone, and the overnight stays allow for the checking of the horses.

Riding school with attached trekking

- 8.12 The inspector shall be clear about which horses are used for each type of function.

Riding schools with attached livery

- 8.13 There shall be a clear distinction of premises between the hired-out horse and those at livery.
- 8.14 In the case of “DIY” livery, a separate feed, tack, and other facilities is preferred.
- 8.15 In case of doubt, the inspector is authorised to inspect all animals on a premises for which a licence is requested, not merely those used in the riding school.

Centres requiring Adventure Activity Licence Association (AALA) licences

- 8.16 This applies to centres offering activities to under 18-year-olds. The licence is given after inspection by the AALA and generally applies to trekking centres where the horses are taken well away from main roads (over 30 minutes travelling time from the nearest road or refuge), and at certain heights of mountain (above 600 metres). It does not strictly apply to all centres, but many get this licence if dealing with school children.
- 8.17 Providers of pony trekking must show that their instructor/leaders are competent to deal with risks arising from being in rugged and remote country as well as those from the use of horses.
- 8.18 The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) was designated as Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA) from 1 April 2007. There is more detailed guidance on the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 2004 available here hse.gov.uk.

Polo centres or other centres hiring horses

- 8.19 Riding establishments teaching polo on hired ponies must ensure compliance with the provisions of the RE Acts and ensure the ponies are suitable for this specific purpose. Similar considerations apply to centres hiring hunters and hacks.

Pony parties

- 8.20 Ponies should be inspected in the usual way and the inspection should take place where the ponies are kept, which may be at a livery yard. Inspectors should the arrangements for transporting the ponies.
- 8.21 The suitability of the persons to run such a business may pose practical problems. The inspector should consider the suitability of the applicant in the usual way and as outlined above.

Part 9: Summary of offences

9.1 In summary, it is an offence under the RE Acts:

- a. To keep a riding establishment without a licence.
- b. To wilfully obstruct or delay any person in the exercise of their powers of entry or inspection.
- c. To permit a person for the time being disqualified under the RE Acts from keeping a riding establishment or to have control or management of an establishment.
- d. To conceal a horse or horses with intent to avoid inspection under the RE Acts.
- e. To use in a riding establishment a horse in contravention of the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 or the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006.
- f. To use in a riding establishment any horse three years old or under, or any mare heavy in foal or within three months after foaling.
- g. To fail to provide curative care for a sick or injured horse used in a riding establishment.
- h. To supply riding equipment, which is visibly defective or likely to cause suffering to the horse, or an accident to the rider.

9.2 Concerns about individuals illegally operating riding establishments should be referred to the relevant local authority or trading standards office in the first instance. The RCVS does not have authority to investigate or prosecute these offences, but will assist the enforcement authorities with investigations, as appropriate.

Part 10: Other relevant legislation and guidance

- 10.1 In addition to the RE Acts, inspectors should be aware of other legislation relevant to their work in this area. This includes current animal welfare legislation which requires those with responsibility for animals to care for them properly and imposes a duty of care on them to take reasonable steps to ensure that their animal's welfare needs are met.
- 10.2 The Animal Welfare Act 2006 (which applies in England and Wales) and the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 define who is responsible for an animal.
- 10.3 The law is clear that a person becomes responsible for an animal by virtue of ownership or where they can be said to have assumed responsibility for its day-to-day care. This includes those who assume responsibility for the animal on a temporary basis, for example, keepers and carers such as the owner's friends, neighbours, and relatives, and staff at livery yards.
- 10.4 Those responsible for animals are required to provide for the following five basic welfare needs:
 - a. A suitable environment.
 - b. A suitable diet.
 - c. The ability to exhibit normal behaviour patterns.
 - d. Housed with, or apart from, other animals.
 - e. Protection from pain (apart from Scotland), suffering, injury, and disease.
- 10.5 This means that people such as owners, keepers, and carers may commit an offence if they do not take reasonable steps to ensure these welfare needs are met. They may also commit an offence if an act, or failure to act, causes an animal to suffer unnecessarily.
- 10.6 Guidance on how these needs might be met is included in the Equine Codes of Practice issued by the Welsh Assembly Government and the Scottish Government in 2009, and by DEFRA for England in 2010.
- 10.7 Further advice is contained in the Code of Practice published by the National Equine Welfare Council at newc.co.uk/.
- 10.8 Inspectors must also comply with their professional responsibilities set out in the [RCVS Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons](#). The accompanying supporting guidance provides further advice on the proper standards of professional practise.

Part 11: Inspection of working donkey premises

11.1 Increasingly, inspectors will be asked by local authorities to inspect premises where working donkeys are used. Inspecting donkeys will be more likely for those working in coastal areas, but there is increased number of inland donkey riding businesses across the UK. The advice in this section has been formulated in conjunction with the Donkey Sanctuary.

Multiple premises

11.2 A common welfare issue is the care and housing for working animals out-of-season, particularly as some donkeys overwinter at an alternative address, for example a foster home, which may be in a different local authority area. The licensing authority should inspect the donkeys' accommodation, grazing, and working environment where practical.

11.3 The location where working days are spent should provide shelter from the elements and access to water and feed but is not the area to inspect. The main housing where evenings and rest days are spent should be inspected to the **same standards as every riding establishment** despite often having non-standard construction. Any other locations used throughout the year should be listed on the form.

11.4 The premises may be of non-standard construction but as long as they conform to the same standards of space, hygiene, safety, ventilation, and fire prevention then they can be deemed fit for purpose.

Inspecting donkeys out of season

11.5 Springtime is the ideal time to carry out an inspection as the 'workers' are prepared for the working season. However, this means that the conditions to bear in mind are those which could affect their work in the future. The three key issues to look out for are:

- a. Respiratory disease due to lack of exertion can present late or not at all. Often donkeys are transported to their place of work by vehicle, and this can cause problems if their breathing is compromised, especially in hot weather.
- b. Hoof conformation as donkeys often do not have the same quality trimming as horses. Inexperienced foot trimmers can be confused by the upright, boxy hoof and, therefore, imbalance can be exacerbated. Hooves should be trimmed every six-to-eight weeks by a qualified farrier.
- c. Body condition – a thick coat can hide a skinny body underneath. Hands-on body condition scoring is important, and ribs should be felt under light pressure. Sores and lice may not also be apparent, so a thorough skin check is required, especially in the girth area.

Soundness

11.6 Making a donkey 'trot-up' can be tricky. Inspectors should attempt a walk and trot, away and towards them, on a hard level surface. Inspectors should not allow the owner to trot the donkeys up in a 'string' as lameness can then be hidden. If an examination of walk and trot is not possible, the inspector should make a note of this in the accompanying letter to the

inspection report.

Condition scoring

11.7 For advice on this aspect, please see thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk/donkey-care.

Identification

11.8 Inspectors should ensure that all donkeys present are inspected and listed. If the owner is reliant on a microchip to identify the animals, then it would be advisable to bring a scanner to check identification. Each donkey's age should also be checked against the passport to ensure compliance with the RE Acts and to aid in identification.

Vaccination and worming

11.9 Owners are recommended to do these but it's often not the case. The products used and vaccination schedules are the same as for horses.

Tack

11.10 The same safety principles apply. The narrow chest and short thorax of a donkey make saddle fitting difficult so inspectors should check the girth, withers, and back for soreness. Each saddle should be matched to a named animal and the rules of saddle fit are the same. Each piece of tack should be checked for soundness and condition.

Foot care

11.11 The Donkey Sanctuary recommends the use of a qualified, registered farrier, ideally with donkey experience, every 6-10 weeks. Often, the beach operators will trim the hooves themselves so attention should be paid to hoof balance, toe length, and heel height. The donkey hoof is more upright and boxy and conformation differences can result in medio-lateral imbalances.

Other advice

11.12 Inspectors should bear in mind the intended use of the donkeys, i.e., short, in-hand rides with low profit margins, but bear in mind that they deserve the same welfare standard.

11.13 For specific advice about donkeys please feel free to contact The Donkey Sanctuary's Veterinary Department on 01395 579162 or vets@thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk

Part 12: Inspecting polo establishments

- 12.1 In some cases, inspectors may be asked by local authorities to conduct inspections of polo establishments where horses are being let out on hire for riding or polo lessons, or for use in providing instruction in riding for payment, or both.
- 12.2 The Hurlingham Polo Association (HPA) governs the sport of polo in the UK. Polo clubs and their players are members and pay an annual fee. Whilst ponies might be hired by HPA members for any polo activity including lessons, not all are, and you do not need to be a HPA member to play polo within a polo school or academy.
- 12.3 The majority of licensed establishments will conduct their business at or will be affiliated to one of the member clubs.
- 12.4 Inspectors should follow the guidance in this document as this explains how the RE Acts apply. However, the Association of Polo Schools and Pony Hirers (APSPH) has produced some general information on how polo establishments operate to assist inspectors with their inspections. The APSPH information note is attached at [Annex B](#).

2016 Riding Hat Standards



Overview

- Due to a change by the European Commission regarding EN1384 and BSEN1384 no longer being an accepted standard, all hats which ONLY meet the standard EN1384 or BSEN1384, and do not comply with another accepted standard **WILL NOT** be permitted for use.
- Hats which bear EN1384 or BSEN1384 ALONG WITH another accepted standard, will be permitted. For example, BSEN1384 & PAS015 (1998 or 2011) along with the Kitemark will be acceptable, but not BSEN1384 on its own.

FAQs for Approved Centres, Registered Instructors and BHS Members

Q: I am a BHS Gold member. Will I be expected to wear a hat which meets the new requirements?

A: The BHS Gold members' policy does not have a particular stipulation regarding the type of hat that needs to be worn. However it does have a reasonable precautions condition. This means that all reasonable precautions need to be taken to prevent an incident at all times. Therefore should an accident arise, insurers may feel that you have not taken the relevant precautions by not wearing the most up to date safety hat. It may not mean that they would not pay out, it may just mean that any damages could be reduced due to contributory negligence.

Q: I run a riding school. What if a riding school client comes for a lesson, with the riding school instructor, and appears with their own hat. The Instructor checks the hat and it is not of the correct standard, the instructor tells the client but the client refuses to use a hat from the school and to replace their own hat. How does the riding school stand from an insurance point of view if the client rides in the lesson?

A: For our riding schools the insurers have said, in this situation, the riding school should still insist the rider wears a hat up to the current standards. The reason being is that the riding school is the 'professional' in this situation and if they have not insisted on them wearing the correct riding hat and an injury occurs the third party solicitors could use this against the riding school and they feel it would be difficult to defend a claim in this situation.

Q: I am a freelance instructor and I have a client who does not want to replace her hat to comply with the new requirements for 2016. Where do I stand if I teach a client knowing their hat is not to the required standard?

A: The instructors should be checking the rider hats as part of their risk assessment and advising individuals if their hat is not to current standard, if a rider does not have the correct standard hat but still wishes to continue with the lesson then this must be documented by the instructor that they have chosen to continue the lesson using that hat.

Q: I run a livery yard, should I make sure that all of the liveries wear a hat to the 2016 requirements?

A: If there are yard rules which stipulate the type of hat to be worn then these should be updated to specify that hats should be to the current standard. If you do not have yard rules regarding hats then you should be advising your livery clients that there has been a change in hat standards and recommend that individuals get their hats checked.

Q: I don't want to insist that my clients wear the correct hat, can I ask them to sign a disclaimer?

A: No. Our insurance company have advised that this is not recommended as case history suggests that a disclaimer does not stand up in a court of law should an individual be prosecuted

Q: I am taking a BHS Exam in 2016, will I need to wear a hat to the 2016 standards?

A: All BHS examinations are covered by the BHS third party liability insurance, therefore it is a requirement that all candidates must wear hats to the required standard. For 2016 all hats will be checked at BHS exams to ensure they meet current safety standards. Fixed peaks will not be permitted for any cross country element of an exam.

Q: I will be taking a BHS exam at an international centre. What are the requirements?

A: The hat standard requirements are exactly the same as those for the UK and will be applied to international exams. All international BHS exams are covered by the BHS third party liability insurance, therefore it is a requirement that all candidates must wear hats to the required standard.

Q: I am a BRC member, will the changes in hat standards affect me?

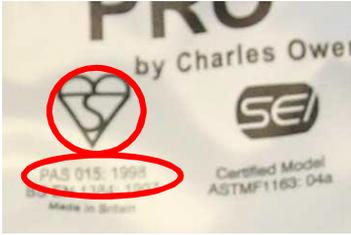
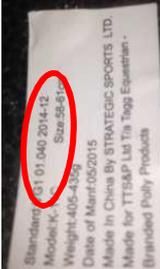
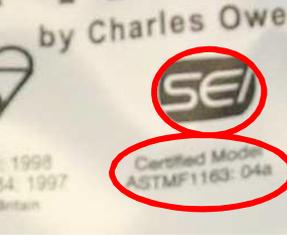
A: Yes. The 2016 hat standards will apply to all BRC members. Members who take part in Area Qualifiers and Championships will have their hats checked and tagged before each competition.

BHS Approved Centres Hat Guidelines 2016

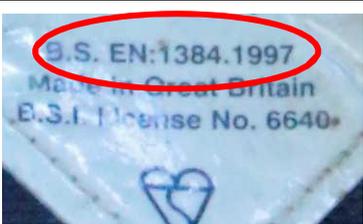
Hats must meet ALL of the requirements of one of the following rows:

IMPORTANT UPDATES FOR 2016:

Due to a change by the European Commission regarding EN1384 and BSEN1384 no longer being an accepted standard, all hats which ONLY meet the standard EN1384 or BSEN1384, and do not comply with another standard from the below list, WILL NOT be permitted for use at any BHS Approved Centre. Hats which bear EN1384 or BSEN1384 ALONG WITH another standard from the below list, will be permitted. For example, BSEN1384 & PAS015 (1998 or 2011) along with the Kitemark would be acceptable, but not BSEN1384 on its own.

	Standard and Date	Quality Assurance Mark	Examples		
1	PAS 015 (1998 or 2011)	AND MUST HAVE BSI Kitemark 			
2	VG1 01.040 (2014-12)	AND MUST HAVE BSI Kitemark 			
3	ASTM F1163 (2004a or 04a onwards)	AND MUST HAVE SEI mark 			
4	SNELL E2001	AND MUST HAVE Official SNELL label and number 			
5	AS/NZS 3838 (2006 onwards)	AND MUST HAVE SAI Global mark 			

Continued on next page

NOT ACCEPTED	 BSEN1384 & EN1384 (any date) 	<p>Hats with ONLY this standard are NOT accepted</p>			
--------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Suggested guidelines for inspecting Polo Establishments from The Association of Polo Schools and Pony Hirers

We expect all the rules and regulations outlined below to be maintained by members and potential members of the APSPH.

The Hurlingham Polo Association governs the sport of Polo in the UK. Polo Club's and their players are members and pay an annual fee. Whilst ponies might be hired by HPA members for any polo activity including lessons, not all are and you do not need to be an HPA member to play polo within a polo school or academy.

The majority of licensed establishments will conduct their business at or will be affiliated to one of the member clubs and have their pony's passports issued or over-stamped by the HPA. The highlighted sections will be of most interest to your licensing vets as they will relate to the animals that you are inspecting.

Tack for polo

NB. The HPA's regulations do not specify all the different kinds of tack used for polo.

Leg protection

As the regulations demand for competitive polo, ponies must have lower leg protection on all four legs. Many providers will, for low level beginner's lessons, only use front leg protection. However some may choose to have a full set of bandages and boots on all four legs and over reach boots in addition. Bandages should be checked on and off the ponies for wear and tear and application to the horse's legs.

Tack

Polo ponies would normally be ridden in a polo saddle (these differ to other saddles quite a bit) and a bridle with two sets of reins. Polo saddles don't have any knee rolls and have very little under the main saddle flaps, this is perfectly normal. Girths may or may not have covers and some may have Argentine style cinch girths. Some polo saddles will also not have the English style metal stirrup clips but fixed stirrups. Most polo people will use very strong buffalo leather for stirrup leathers and large wide stirrups. It is very rare to see safety stirrups in polo. Most stirrups will not have traditional rubber stirrup treads. All polo ponies will be ridden with breastplates and in most cases over girths, however neither are compulsory but both are recommended.

Bridles normally are gags of varying designs or Pelham's (including coscojero's). All ponies will be played in a standing martingale. There are no HPA rules about what you can use only about the mouth piece size and shank length for bits or any tack that inhibits vision of the pony.

Most establishments won't have individual tack for each pony, many ponies will share tack. This is acceptable practise within polo.

Housing of ponies

Not all polo ponies are kept in, in fact a lot of establishments don't stable their hireling or lesson ponies. This is acceptable practise in polo. Whilst it is accepted that it is a requirement to have at least one isolation box, not all yards will have access to stables to match the number of ponies they own or run.

Changing of horses between seasons

Many establishments will have two strings of ponies or more ponies than they have listed on their licence. They may choose to swap ponies over at the end of the summer season or at the end of the arena season. Older, less able ponies or those with leg issues may be semi-retired to play the arena season as it has less strain on the ponies. When establishments go through their annual licence there may be ponies that are fat, unfit, with long mains and no shoes. These ponies will probably be used for a different season. It is acceptable to turn ponies away for long periods of time in-between seasons.

Onsite and offsite activities

Polo doesn't always need access to an arena, in the summer polo is played on grass fields. In the winter polo is played in an arena, however many establishments won't have their own facilities for both of either season so their ponies will be trucked from the licenced site to another location. In these scenarios their risk assessments must take into account offsite hires and activities at different clubs and locations.

These offsite activities will also mean that they will need to have a vet kit, buckets and general equipment that can go on-the-move for offsite polo.

Workload

Some ponies will only be used for lessons, some for all levels and some for isolated levels. Some ponies will be used for only one season, either grass or arena, and some will do both. The rules set by the HPA and SUPA differ and means that a pony can do a maximum of 3 chukkas in a day at no more than two locations for SUPA and for the HPA a maximum of 2 non-consecutive chukkas. However there is no current limit set for the number of lessons or even maximum amount of time a pony can be used. At the moment it is up to the discretion of the establishment.

Suitability of ponies

There is a huge range in the kind of ponies used in schools, some will be specifically sought for polo schools whilst others have had a full polo career and are retired to teaching lives. You may expect to see ponies of more mature ages in polo establishments. Many establishments will have ponies on all sorts of levels for players from complete beginners to professional players. Some ponies may be capable of both but most will do one or the other.

Reputation is everything in polo and if clients, schools or companies that hire ponies find a supplier with ponies that are not suitable to ride then word gets around. Umpires, match officials and polo clubs also have a duty to prevent dangerous or lame ponies from playing polo.

Hats

Not all establishments in polo will provide hats for lessons. It is important to note that currently there are only two manufacturers of hats sold in the UK that currently carry the PAS 015 Kite and CE Mark. Charles Owen polo helmets and Edition polo helmets. No other polo helmets should be used, especially the single strap Argentine style. However, there is still no mandatory hat required to be used in polo.

Paperwork

Risk Assessments

Risk assessments should cover onsite, offsite and travel to and from activities onsite. Risk assessments for employees, horses, clients and any agency employees and contractors (Farriers/ vets etc). Welfare and protection of children must also be taken into consideration as well as the suitability and on-the-ground temperaments of the ponies in their care.

Policies

First Aid, Fire protection, Child protection and welfare and so on.

Reporting of accidents

Accident report record books

RIDDOR procedures etc

The Hurlingham Polo Association Rules and Regulations regarding ponies and pony welfare

From the 2015 Annexe B of the Regulations of the HPA

8. MISUSE OF SUBSTANCES

8.1 Permitted Medication The administration of any drug or substance which is not a normal constituent of horse feed is banned with the exception of those listed below as permitted medication subject to their always being administered within the manufacturers' recommendations and therapeutic guidelines and within HPA rules.: a. Licensed non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs). b. Corticosteroids. c. Diuretics. d. Clenbuterol (Ventipulmin) e. Dembrexine (Sputolosin) f. Isoxsuprine (Navilox). g. Regumate h. Cemetidine (Tagamet) i. Ranitidine (Zantac) j. Omeprazole (Gastroguard) k. Antibiotics except procaine penicillin.

From the 2015 Rules of the HPA

4. PONIES, TACK AND PONY WELFARE

a. General. The ultimate responsibility for care and welfare of a pony rests at all times with the owner. The Stewards, Tournament Committee, Club Welfare Officers and the Umpires have a duty to enforce the Regulations and Rules and may call in veterinary advice.

Additional matters on the welfare of ponies, particularly on serious injury and the administration of drugs, are covered in Rule 30a and Annex B of the Regulations. See also HPA booklet 'Polo Pony Welfare Guidelines'.

b. Veterinary Cover and Use.

(i) A veterinary surgeon who is a practising Member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (MRCVS) must either be present or on immediate call at all matches played within the tournaments listed in the Fixture List 2014. In addition a nominated club official should be in attendance at all matches and practice chukkas arranged by the club to deal with welfare issues.

(ii) The 1966 Veterinary Surgeons Act lays down that within the UK, any activity described as 'veterinary surgery' can only be carried out by a MRCVS or FRCVS except that a veterinary surgeon on occasion may delegate some veterinary tasks, such as minor surgery or medical procedures, in particular, to a registered veterinary nurse. Any member or club that allows an individual who is not an MRCVS to carry out any veterinary surgery, except as above, on a pony may be liable to a charge of misconduct.

c. Welfare Officer. Every club must appoint a Welfare Officer who has a responsibility for pony welfare particularly in the pony lines. The Welfare Officer or his representative should be present at all matches. (See Annex B para 4)

d. Vaccinations and Pony Passports. All ponies must have, by law, a passport which may be obtained through the HPA. Each pony must also have a valid vaccination certificate, which undeniably relates to the pony, completed, signed and stamped on each line by a MRCVS. • For ponies registered with the HPA before 31st December 2013 it must state that the pony has received two injections for primary vaccination against Equine Influenza given no less than 21 days and no more than 92 days apart. Thereafter, booster injections must be given annually. The first injection for primary vaccination must have been given before the pony may play at any club or in any tournament. • For ponies registered in 2014 or with no vaccination history, the passport must state that the pony has received two injections for primary vaccination against Equine Influenza given no less than 21 days and no more than 92 days apart, plus a third booster within 3 to 7 months of the second vaccination. Thereafter, booster injections must be given annually. The first injection for primary vaccination must have been given before the pony may play at any club or in any tournament.

e. Contagious or Infectious Diseases. Any pony owner, stable manager or polo club which has a suspected case of a contagious disease such as ringworm or an infectious disease such as strangles or equine herpes must inform the HPA immediately with details of the action being taken. No infected pony or others in contact will be brought to a polo ground until clearance is given by an MRCVS.

f. Turnout and Prohibited Tack. Ponies are expected to be well turned out and poor or badly fitted tack is not allowed (see note for best playing or turned out pony). Each pony must be protected by bandages or boots on all four legs and it must have its tail put up. Any

equipment that has sharp projections which might cause injury to the pony or any other pony or player is forbidden. The following are not allowed to be used during any game: (i) A noseband, headpiece or headcollar which incorporates wire or any sharp material. (ii) A hackamore or bitless bridle (may be used in practice chukkas at the discretion of the club). (iii) Blinkers or any form of noseband or other equipment which obstructs the vision of the pony. (iv) The mouthpiece of any bit, whether single or double, of not less than 0.25 inch (6.50 mm) in diameter at its narrowest point. (v) The total cheek length of a curb bit may not exceed 6 inches (15.2cms). (vi) A tongue tie unless inspected by a MRCVS immediately prior to the chukka. The tongue tie must be removed as soon as the pony leaves the field of play.

10.

g. Pony to Be Sent Off. (See also Rule 6b and 30a) A pony suffering from any of the following conditions is not permitted to play and if playing must be sent off immediately:

- (i) Lameness
- (ii) Showing signs of distress
- (iii) Not under proper control or showing vice
- (iv) Showing blood from any part

h. Pony Not To Be Played. (See also Rule 6b.) A pony may not be played if:

- i. Blind in either eye
- ii. It has any form of open tracheotomy (tubing)
- iii. De-nerved (chemically or surgically desensitized). If desensitized temporarily then it must wait until full sensation has returned.

i. Shoes and Shoeing. The Farriers' Registration Act of 1975 states that any person who shoes a horse, including their own, must be a farrier registered with the Farriers Registration Council. Any member or club that allows an individual who is not registered with the Farriers Registration Council to shoe a pony may be liable to a charge of misconduct. Frost nails, road studs, screws and fancy spikes or any protruding nails or sharp edges on a shoe are not allowed except as below:

(i) Rimmed shoes may be worn but the rim must be on the inside of the shoe only.

(ii) A calkin or stud must be of less than 0.5" (13 mm) cubed or hexagonal, and must be fitted on the last inch (25mm) of the outside heel of the hind shoe. A non-slip plug or road plug may be fitted. A plug is sunken into the shoe by a farrier and is not to be confused with any form of stud.

(iii) If a shoe has a calkin or fixed stud it must be balanced by a raised and feathered inside heel tapered for a minimum of 1.5" (40 mm).

(iv) A removable stud, which is the type strongly recommended, should be removed before the pony leaves the grounds.

(v) A pony may be shod with a maximum of two road nails or non-slip nails per shoe in order that it may be exercised safely on the roads. Such nails must not be on the widest part of the shoe.

(vi) A pony may be played without all four shoes or without hind shoes. Should this lead to the pony not being under proper control so as to be a danger to itself or others then it should be ordered off by the umpires. (See also 30c.)

j. Medication at Polo. A pony which has been medicated by any route (by injection or ingestion) at polo may not play thereafter that same day. The only exception is if a minor and unobtrusive injury or wound is treated or repaired including using a local anaesthetic to a part of a pony that will not affect its performance and the pony is then passed fit to play by a MRCVS.

k. Water and Muzzles. Clubs must ensure that fresh or running water is readily available at all pony and horsebox lines. Water should not be withheld for an extended period and should be offered to ponies after they have played (see Annex B para 4e). Muzzles should only be used for short periods to prevent a pony from feeding. They must not be adapted in any way to reduce the ability to breathe or drink.

l. Number of Chukkas. In the normal duration of a match, a pony must not be played for more than two full non-consecutive chukkas, or the equivalent time; a pony which has played in more than half a chukka may not be played again for at least ten minutes. Should a match go to extra time then a pony that has played two chukkas may be played for as much time as the extra chukka lasts providing it has had a break of at least ten minutes. A pony must not be played in more than three full chukkas or the equivalent time in any one day or at more than two locations.

m. Ponies Used for Umpiring. A pony to be ridden by an umpire must be equipped as for playing except that the tail need not be put up. Should an umpire deem that the pony offered is unsuitable for umpiring then the team providing the pony must provide another. A pony that has played in a match at 8 goal level or below may be used as an umpire pony if it has had a break of at least one chukka or vice versa. Above 8 goal, any pony that has played in a match should not subsequently be used as an umpire pony or vice versa. (See also Rule 1j.)

11

n. Drugs. The administration to a pony of any drug or substance that is not a normal constituent of horse feed or is not listed as permitted in Annex B to the Regulations is prohibited.

o. Horse Ambulance. Either a trailer with motor vehicle attached or a low loading lorry each with ramp equipped with a winch and screens must be available near to the ground at all times during play. Clubs should practise the procedure from time to time. As well as a winch and screens the horse ambulance should carry ropes, a drag mat, a spare headcollar, a tarpaulin, a bucket of sand and a knife for slitting saddlery.

Note 1. Best Playing or Turned Out Pony.

Clubs are encouraged to award a prize for the best playing or best turned out pony. They must however ensure that the pony is in a fit state to collect its prize - i.e. that it is not distressed, looks well and does not have spur or whip marks, a cut mouth, sore back or any other signs of ill treatment. If a pony has received an accidental injury, such as a tread, then it should not be excluded from collecting its prize, provided that the injury has been properly treated. If a veterinary surgeon is present he should be asked to inspect the pony prior to the presentation.

Note 2. Old Ponies. Owners of old ponies aged 16 or over are advised to have a heart and eye test done by a MRCVS at the start of each season.

Contacting the APSPH

W: www.apsph-polo.org.uk

E: enquiries@apsph-polo.org.uk

T: @the_apsph

