

CODE OF PRACTICE



for
Welfare Organisations Involved
in the Keeping of Horses,
Ponies & Donkeys



Introduction

Aim

This Code of Practice, produced by the National Equine Welfare Council (hereafter referred to as the NEWC), aims to ensure that high standards of husbandry are maintained by all the NEWC member organisations holding horses, ponies, donkeys, hinnies and mules (hereafter referred to as horses).

The NEWC is the representative body for member organisations. Adherence to the Code is a requirement of membership as is the acceptance of regular external inspections to confirm that standards are maintained.

All equine welfare organisations are encouraged to become members of the NEWC, to agree to maintain high standards of care and to work in conjunction with other similar organisations for the benefit of the horse.

A high standard of husbandry is fundamental to, and will have a direct bearing upon, an organisation's ability to achieve its welfare objectives.

The Code Outlines minimum levels of equine care, which are expected of member organisations of the NEWC and is strongly recommended to all equine organisations.

Code of Practice

Planning For Success

Experience shows that success is dependent on an organisation's ability to develop and adhere to a business plan, raise sufficient funds and maintain public support. Failure is frequently attributable to one or more of the following factors:

1. Correct Stocking Levels.

Organisations must ensure that clear entry criteria are set and that only as many horses as resources will allow are accepted, in order to sustain a proper standard of care. Organisations should be prepared to refuse animals and work with other organisations to find alternative care when maximum numbers have been reached. Member organisations will agree optimum and maximum stocking levels based upon the following factors:

- Availability of grazing/turnout.
- Type & quality of land.
- Type and age of horses held.
- Availability of shelter/stabling.
- Staff availability and qualification.
- The type of organisation.
- Availability of sufficient funds.

2. Good Husbandry and Presentation.

Organisations should demonstrate responsible ownership through a high standard of horse care and presentation of premises.

3. Sound Business Plan.

A sound financial plan must be maintained and the organisation's most recent accounts should be available on request.

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Staffing

4. Availability.

Sufficient staff must be provided at all times to ensure proper, regular and timely attention to all horses held. Allowance must be made for holidays and sickness when calculating staff requirements.

5. Voluntary Staff.

The assistance of volunteers may be encouraged but full-time paid staff are likely to be required to provide the necessary supervision and continuity of care

6. Cost.

The cost of paid staff is likely to be the single greatest expense that the organisation will incur. Attention must be directed to ensuring that sufficient funds are available.

7. Qualifications.

Persons responsible for the care and safety of horses must demonstrate competence in horse care and management either by a recognised examination or practical experience.

8. Riding.

Horses should be ridden only by, or under the supervision of, a suitably qualified/experienced person.

9. Health and Safety.

Staff and volunteers must be made aware of current Health and Safety Regulations and it is the responsibility of all parties to maintain a safe working environment. Appropriate safety equipment should be provided. Organisations must carry sufficient insurance.

Entry Criteria

10. Reasons for Accepting Horses.

Each organisation should have a clear view of:

- (a) its aims and objectives.
- (b) the criteria that each horse must meet before it is accepted.

11. Quality of Life.

Before acceptance, careful consideration must be given to the future welfare and quality of life of the animal and the organisation's ability to provide it.

12. Purchase.

Rescuing horses by purchase, which rewards those responsible for neglect, is strongly discouraged.

13. Resources.

It is unacceptable for an organisation to take in more horses than the resources (facilities, staff, grazing and funds) will allow for the proper care and attention of the animals.

Husbandry

14. Accommodation.

Suitable, safe accommodation of adequate size and quantity to cope with maximum stocking rates must be provided.

15. Stable Management Programme.

An effective stable management programme must be adhered to and should include appropriate record keeping.

Turnout

16. Pasture Management.

An effective pasture management system should be employed primarily to maximise grazing but also to allow a favourable presentation of the organisation. Efforts must be made to avoid horses having to endure 'poached' land, especially in frozen conditions.

17. Grazing.

Sufficient grazing and/or exercise facilities, with appropriate fencing and a suitable water supply should be available *throughout* the year.

18. Shelter.

Animals should have access to adequate shelter (purpose built or natural).

20. Feed and Water. All horses must receive sufficient, regular feed and water appropriate to their individual type, condition, age and level of work.

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Healthplan

21. Veterinary Support.

A nominated veterinary practice, experienced in equine care, should be retained to treat animals and provide advice.

22. Health Plan.

A health care plan should be agreed with veterinary advisers to include details of worming, vaccination and dental health. Full records should be kept.

23. Foot Care.

All horses should have their feet attended to by a registered farrier as necessary. This treatment should be recorded.

24. Daily Inspections.

All horses must be inspected daily to ensure their health and well being. Facilities should also be checked for water supply, security and safety.

25. Exercise.

All horses should be given adequate and regular exercise/turn out according to their type, age, fitness and state of health.

Euthanasia

26. Guidelines & Checklist.

Horses should be humanely destroyed promptly on veterinary advice or when their quality of life is considered to be significantly and permanently reduced. Where possible, this should be carried out on site. Organisations must recognise that these decisions are an essential part of responsible horse management.

27. Identification.

Organisations are encouraged to provide permanent identification of their horses for security and as a demonstration of responsible ownership.

28. Loan Schemes.

Where a loan or other re-homing scheme is in operation:

- (a) Horses should only be transferred to homes where persons accepting them appear to be responsible, suitably experienced in horse care and have adequate facilities and resources.
- (b) Whilst ownership is being retained by the organisation, regular follow up inspections must be made to ensure that these standards are maintained.
- (c) The cost of administering the re-homing scheme will be a major expense that must be taken into consideration.
- (d) On going liability in respect of loaned horses must be considered and covered by insurance. Professional advice should be sought.

29. Inspection of NEWC Members.

Member organisations should be prepared to accept external inspection under the authority of the NEWC to confirm that standards are being maintained.

30. Closure.

Provision must be made to protect the future welfare of all horses in the care of the organisation in the event of its closure. The NEWC will offer advice where appropriate.

Starting a New Organisation

For those considering starting a new equine welfare organisation, the following questions should be considered:

30. Objectives.

Have clear, practical and achievable aims and objectives been set?

31. Need.

Is there a need for such a welfare organisation? If a local or national organisation already exists, it may be better to develop a liaison with it rather than to set up a new one. A list of member organisations is available from the Secretary.

32. Trustees.

Have potential Trustees with sufficient knowledge of: equine management, business organisation and Charity law been identified?

33. Fundraising.

Can sufficient funds be raised and maintained to sustain the organisation?

34. Business Plan.

Has a sound business plan been established?

35. Charity Commissioners.

Has further advice been sought from the Charity Commissioners? Enquiry Number: 0870 333 0123.

For more information please write to:

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