

Horse Riding Establishments



Guidance Notes

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document provides practical guidance on relevant standards and statutory requirements for persons operating horse riding establishments.

Included are constructional standards, animal welfare considerations, and good management practice.

The document does not cover health and safety at work.

2.0 LEGISLATION

2.1 Planning / Building Control Legislation

For both new and existing Riding Establishments it is necessary to obtain planning permission in the following instances:-

- i To use the premises as a Riding Establishment
- ii To erect new stables or other buildings on the site
- iii To change the use of all or part of the premises, e.g. where part of a farm is to be used as a riding centre

When planning permission has been gained it will be necessary to submit detailed plans for Building Regulation approval if the proposals involve substantial alterations, new build or major drainage works.

2.2 Riding Establishments Acts 1964 and 1970

Requires that anyone operating a riding establishment must obtain a licence from the local authority for the area where the premises are located.

The licence is renewable annually.

A 'Riding Establishment' is defined as 'the carrying on of a business of keeping horses to let them out for riding, or for use in providing instruction in riding for payment or both'.

A satisfactory Veterinary Surgeon's report on the premises is required prior to the licence being issued.

2.3 Food Safety Act 1990

If catering for staff and/or customers is provided at the premises, it will be necessary to comply with food hygiene regulations which stipulate standards for construction and finishes in food rooms, facilities, hygiene practices and staff training.

3.0 Requirements of the Riding Establishments Acts

The Riding Establishments Acts set out certain requirements in respect of the construction, layout and management of the premises which must be met before the licence is issued or renewed.

3.1 The Licence Holder

To obtain a licence the applicant must be over 18 years old and be sufficiently knowledgeable to manage a horse riding establishment to ensure the safety of staff and customers and the welfare of the horses.

This may be proven either:-

- i by demonstrating an extensive knowledge of horse management gained through experience;
- ii by holding one of the following qualifications, British Horse Society Assistant Instructor, Instructor, or Fellowship Certificate, Fellowship of the Institute of the Horse, Association of British Riding Schools Teaching Certificate, Principals Diploma or Fellow of the Association. Consideration may also be given to persons holding the BHS Horse Masters or Stable Managers certificate.
- iii by employing a manager who meets the above criteria.

3.2 Supervision of the premises

No person under the age of sixteen should be left in control of the establishment, be permitted to instruct or be in control of a lesson.

3.3 Supervision of rides

Persons put in charge of a ride or lesson must have sufficient experience for the task which they are required to undertake, be competent handlers of horses and either hold appropriate qualifications or have substantial practical experience.

Although circumstances may permit certain variations, it is recommended that the following instructor/student ratios are adhered to during riding.

- i Assistant instructor - 4 students
- ii Intermediate instructor - 5/8 students
- iii Instructor - 7/10 students

It is recommended that for hacks no more than 6 riders are under the care of one instructor, who must be at least 16 years old and competent to supervise a hack.

This does not prevent clients going out on individual hacks if the proprietor is satisfied that the client is competent to ride without supervision.

Significant variation from these ratios should only occur upon consideration by a person competent to make a decision based on experience and knowledge of riders, horses and the type of lesson being undertaken. Anyone taking charge of a ride on the road should have passed the BHS Riding and Road Safety test.

3.4 Supervision of group rides

Group rides must be adequately supervised taking into account the instructor /student ratios indicated above.

Additionally group rides must be organised so that:-

- i the least experienced riders are on the quietest horses;
- ii riders with the least experience are in the middle of the ride;

- iii young or nervous horses are positioned on the inside of an older experienced horse. Under no circumstances must riders ride more than two abreast;
- iv experienced riders are always at the front of the ride.
- v Ride escorts must carry a lead rein, mobile phone and a small first aid kit. They must be familiar with basic first aid and carry a list of essential phone numbers, i.e. riding establishment, vet and emergency services.

3.5 Horses on the highway

Persons escorting groups of riders on the road should have passed the BHS Riding and Road Safety test. They must also be familiar with the Highway Code.

The horses must be ridden on the left hand side of the road. Riders must not be more than two abreast, (single file on bends), and there must be a drill for getting into single file quickly.

Groups should not exceed 9 horses with novice riders remaining near to the kerb. Competent riders should take the head and rear of the group, asking traffic to slow down, and thanking those that do.

Riding on the road in conditions of poor visibility must be avoided wherever practical. Reflective tabards or cross belts should be worn by riders. Reflective spats are available for the horse's legs. Stirrup lights must be worn at night.

A procedure to be followed in the event of an accident must be established, for example:-

- i halt the ride in an orderly manner in a safe place;
- ii dismount and hand over the horse to a responsible person;
- iii delegate control procedures;
- iv position someone on either side of the accident to slow down and control traffic;
- v apply first aid to the injured party or animal;
- vi call emergency services if required;
- vii record details of the incident in the accident book at the riding establishment. If relevant a BHS traffic accident report should be completed.
- viii if relevant, notify insurance company.

When leading a horse on the highway, either on foot or from another horse, the horse must be on the left hand side of the road, and led from the handlers left, placing the handler between the horse and the traffic. The horse being led must wear a bridle and if saddled must have the stirrups 'run up' and secured.

3.6 Insurance

Proprietors of riding establishments must hold current insurance to cover clients and other third parties against accidental injury.

3.6 Construction and layout – Stabling

Riding establishments must have accommodation suitable for the horses/ponies kept, in respect of construction, size, number of occupants, lighting, ventilation and drainage. Storage facilities must be available for forage, bedding, stable equipment and saddlery.

There should be appropriate notices and signage displayed, as detailed in Appendix One.

Stables must be sized so that the horse is able to lie down, get up, and walk around in comfort. Suitable dimensions for a loose box would be:-

- i 3.7m x 4.3m (12ft x 14ft) for a large hunter
- ii 3.7m x 3.0m (12ft x 10ft) for a pony

Headroom must be adequate with a recommended minimum of 3m (10ft). The stable must be warm, dry and free from any projections likely to cause injury to the horse or attendant. Corrugated sheeting is a common cause of injury and should be avoided.

If asbestos sheeting is used as roofing material, it must be insulated.

Stable doors should be 1.2m (4ft) wide by 2.7m (7ft) high, be divided in two, open outwards or sideways and be fitted with anti-slide bolts and a kick latch at the bottom. (N.B. These dimensions may be adjusted for ponies.)

A suitable size for stalls is 1.8m (6ft) wide x 2.7m (9ft) deep, with a passage to the rear of the stall which has a minimum width of 1.8m (6ft). Dividing partitions should be 2m (6ft 6") high at the front and 1.5m (5ft) high at the rear.

Levels of natural light in the stable must be sufficient to allow grooming, etc. in the absence of artificial light. Where windows are glazed they must be protected by grilles or iron bars.

Electric light switches, light bulbs and fluorescent tubes must be out of the reach of horses and / or fitted with suitable guards.

Electric wiring must be regularly cleaned and fixed where it cannot be damaged by the horse. Ideally, rubber insulated cable should be enclosed in suitable conduit as ammonia fumes cause it to deteriorate.

Draught free ventilation must be provided. This can be achieved via louvers in the roof or walls which direct cold air upwards.

Floors must be well drained, impervious, sound and non-slip. Roughened concrete or blue brick is suitable.

Drainage gullies within the box are not recommended as they are prone to blockage and there is the potential for the horse to crack the cover and become trapped or injured.

3.7 Construction/Layout - Exercise Areas

The exercise area should be approximately 20m x 40m, and be flat and free from obstructions/distractions which could upset or alarm the horse.

Jumps must be constructed on level ground and take off and landing areas must be maintained regularly to ensure that they remain in good condition.

Jumps must be examined regularly to ensure that there are no split poles or protruding nails. When not in use, jumps must be stacked neatly, away from schooling area. Where jumps are erected there must be no poorly balanced or fixed jump wings.

3.8 Construction/layout. - Indoor schools

The ground surface must be of a type which affords adequate footholds. Access should either be via a sliding door or a door which opens outwards. Inward opening doors must not impinge on the riding area.

The access doors must be kept closed at all times the school is in use and a notice indicating that entry should be made quietly and only after prior permission has been obtained, must be prominently displayed on the exterior of the building.

A kicking board 1.35m (4' 6") in height and which slopes outwards at an angle of approximately 10 degrees, must be fitted right around the perimeter of the school.

Obstructions or protrusions must be suitably protected, eg by rollers. Only authorised personnel should be permitted in the school. A special area should be set aside for spectators.

3.9 Construction/Layout. - Lunging ménage

Lunging must only be carried out in a fenced area by trained experienced personnel. Spectators must not be permitted in the area during lunging.

3.10 Construction/layout. - Collecting yard

The collecting yard is an area outside the stable blocks where the riders mount, dismount and prepare for riding lessons.

The yard must be level and well drained with adequate foothold and should be kept free from obstruction.

Access and egress points should be gated, so that in an emergency horses are held within the confines of the yard.

Access gates must be kept closed.

3.11 Construction/Layout – Grazing

Horses at grass must be provided with water at all times and with supplementary feeding when the grass is sparse.

For horses permanently at grass with winter supplements one acre per horse provides sufficient grazing.

Fencing should be of the post and rail type, (rails facing inwards), and should be around 5 feet high, (not less than 4 feet high).

The fencing must be regularly inspected and maintained to remove loose wire, protruding nails, split timber etc.

Some form of shelter from the elements must be provided. Adequate natural shelter is acceptable.

The horses must be visited at least once daily, droppings collected and the field inspected for any items that may have been dumped.

Ragwort must be removed and burnt outside the field.

Old baths should not be used as water troughs as they may cause cuts and bruising to the horses' legs.

3.12 Fire

The provision of effective fire prevention measures are a requirement of the Riding Establishments licence. Riding establishments present a particularly high fire risk because buildings are generally of wooden construction and hay and straw are present in substantial quantities.

The fire prevention strategy should include:-

- i A ban on smoking in all parts of the establishment.
- ii The provision of suitable fire fighting appliances.
- iii A regular maintenance programme for fire extinguishers etc.
- iv An effective evacuation procedure.
- v Clear and conspicuous signage indicating assembly points and evacuation procedures.
- vi Staff training in the use of fire fighting equipment and in the evacuation procedure.
- vii Information to visitors on action to be taken in the event of fire.
- viii Suggested procedures and precautions are detailed in Appendix Two, 'Fire Precautions'.

3.14 Veterinary first aid / infectious disease control

The provision of veterinary first aid equipment on the premises is a requirement of the licence.

Drugs, medicines and treatments must be held in a locked cupboard and administered only by nominated competent personnel whose names must be displayed.

A safe system for the disposal of unwanted drugs and hypodermic syringes must be provided.

Facilities must be available for the isolation of a sick horse in the event of an outbreak of infectious disease.

4.0 Further information

Further advice and information may be obtained from:-

- East Devon District Council, Council Offices, Knowle Sidmouth, Devon, EX10 8HL
Tel: 01395 517457,

email: environmentalhealth@eastdevon.gov.uk

- Your Veterinary Surgeon
- The British Horse Society, British Equestrian Centre, Stoneleigh, Kenilworth, Warwickshire, CV8 2LR. Tel. 01203 696697
- Association of British Riding Schools, Old Brewery Yard, Penzance, Cornwall, TR18 2SL. Tel. 01736 69440

Appendix One – Stable Notices and Records

Appendix Two – Fire Precautions

Appendix 1

Stable Notices and Records

- 1 Name, address and telephone number** of licence holder to be prominently displayed on the premises. It is also recommended that a contact name and phone number for the Vet and the Farrier for the premises be displayed.
- 2 Fire Notices** **Instructions as to the action to be taken in the event of fire** to be prominently displayed on the premises.
- 3 Accident Book** Used to record accidents to staff or members of the public at the premises.
- 4 Insurance** **Third party insurance cover** is required under the terms of the Riding Establishments Acts 1964 and 1970. An up to date certificate of **Employers Liability insurance** must be displayed.
- 5 Young Stock Register** **All horses aged three and under** in the possession of the licence holder must be entered in **a register** available on request by an authorised officer.
- 6 'Health and Safety Law - What You Should Know' poster.**
This must be displayed. It should include the name and address of the enforcing authority and of the Employment Medical Advisory Service.

The following types of record are not statutory requirements but could reasonably be expected to be found in the majority of well organised and efficiently managed establishments.

- 1 Daily log** A record of the days events detailing arrivals and departures.
- 2 Horse and pony register** Records of each horse showing date of arrival, size, age and sex.
- 3 Veterinary records** A record of all drugs given, including reactions
- 4 Shoeing register** Record of which horses are shod and when.
- 5 Equipment register** A record of all the equipment held at the premises including maintenance schedules.
- 6 Riding tuition sheets** Individual records of clients receiving instruction, detailing previous experience, present level of competence, emergency contacts, health considerations etc.
- 7 British Horse Society Signs** Fire action, Riding School Rules, Hats to a current BSI Standard, Riding is a Risk Sport

Appendix 2 - Fire precautions

STABLE FIRES – ACTION

Fire is one of the most horrific dangers facing a stabled horse. Prompt action, calmly undertaken by staff is an essential requirement.

- i On discovering fire sound the alarm.
- ii Dial 999, ask for the Fire Services, give name, address of fire and the telephone number you are speaking from.
- iii First evacuate those horses nearest to the fire to the nearest paddock or enclosure not likely to be affected by the fire. Secure control of the frightened animals is essential. Always have a head collar conveniently placed if the horses are in loose boxes, or a spare shank if they permanently wear head collars or are tied in stalls. A coat, sack or blanket placed over the horses head as a blindfold may help.
- iv Remove all horses, working progressively away from the fire area.
- v If working single handed in a large yard DO NOT attempt to fight an established fire until all the horses are removed.
- vi If you are present at the onset, small outbreaks of fire which can easily be contained should be tackled if the equipment is to hand. **NEVER** put yourself in danger by trying to tackle a fire where there is a lot of smoke, or which is near flammable materials or where one extinguisher is insufficient to extinguish it.
- vii If the fire is confined to an unoccupied building contain the fire by closing doors windows and other openings. (Providing that this can be done without risk to persons.)
- viii **NEVER** turn horses out loose in the yard unless there is no alternative. Close all loose box doors after removing horses as they regard their stables as a place of refuge and might attempt to return to the burning building. A yard full of loose horses will cause great difficulty to the fire brigade on their arrival and may result in horses escaping onto the highway.
- ix Designate an area away from likely seats of fire to contain the horses whilst the fire is being tackled.

PREVENTION

Consult with the Fire Prevention Officer for advice.

Stable yards should always be equipped with the following.

- i An alarm which is regularly tested.
- ii Extinguishers which are regularly tested.
- iii A hose pipe permanently attached to the mains supply, and of sufficient length to reach all buildings. The pipe should be maintained on a reel and regularly extended and tested for leaks.
- iv 'NO SMOKING' notices must be displayed around the premises.
- v No flammable materials such as LPG, petrol, paraffin or paint must be stored in the

vicinity of the stable.

- vi All staff must have received instruction on the fire drill, and the drill must be rehearsed regularly.
- Vii Where several horses are stabled in the same building, there must always be more than one exit.
- viii Never construct cage boxes in a building unless the passageway is a minimum of 1.183m (6ft) wide and all box doors either open outwards and fold back flat against the outside of the box or are of a sliding design.
- ix Never allow bonfires or fireworks near the stables.
- x Display a notice which gives the location of another telephone should the stable telephone become unusable.
- xi Consider the installation of a fire hydrant.

SUGGESTED FORMAT OF FIRE PRECAUTIONS NOTICE

COLOUR White lettering on a red background.

LOCATION To be fixed on the outside of the main building.

HEADING 'ACTION TO BE TAKEN IN THE EVENT OF FIRE'

- i ON DISCOVERY OF A FIRE SOUND THE ALARM (If fire bell or triangle etc. is installed the location of this equipment must be shown on the notice).
- ii IF THE STABLES ARE ON FIRE OR COULD BE INVOLVED RELEASE HORSES INTO(State location of field or designated place of safety on the notice). WHEN RELEASING HORSES START WITH THOSE NEAREST TO THE FIRE AND WORK AWAY FROM IT.
- iii CALL THE FIRE BRIGADE OR ENSURE THAT THEY HAVE BEEN CALLED. (The location of the nearest telephone together with that of the next nearest should be stated).
- iv TACKLE THE FIRE WITH EXTINGUISHERS OR OTHER APPLIANCES. (The position of such appliances should be stated).