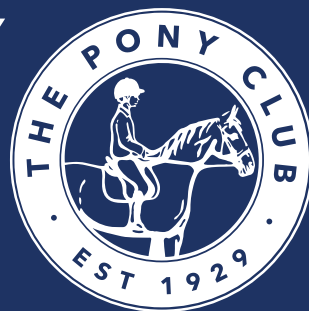


EQUINE WELFARE

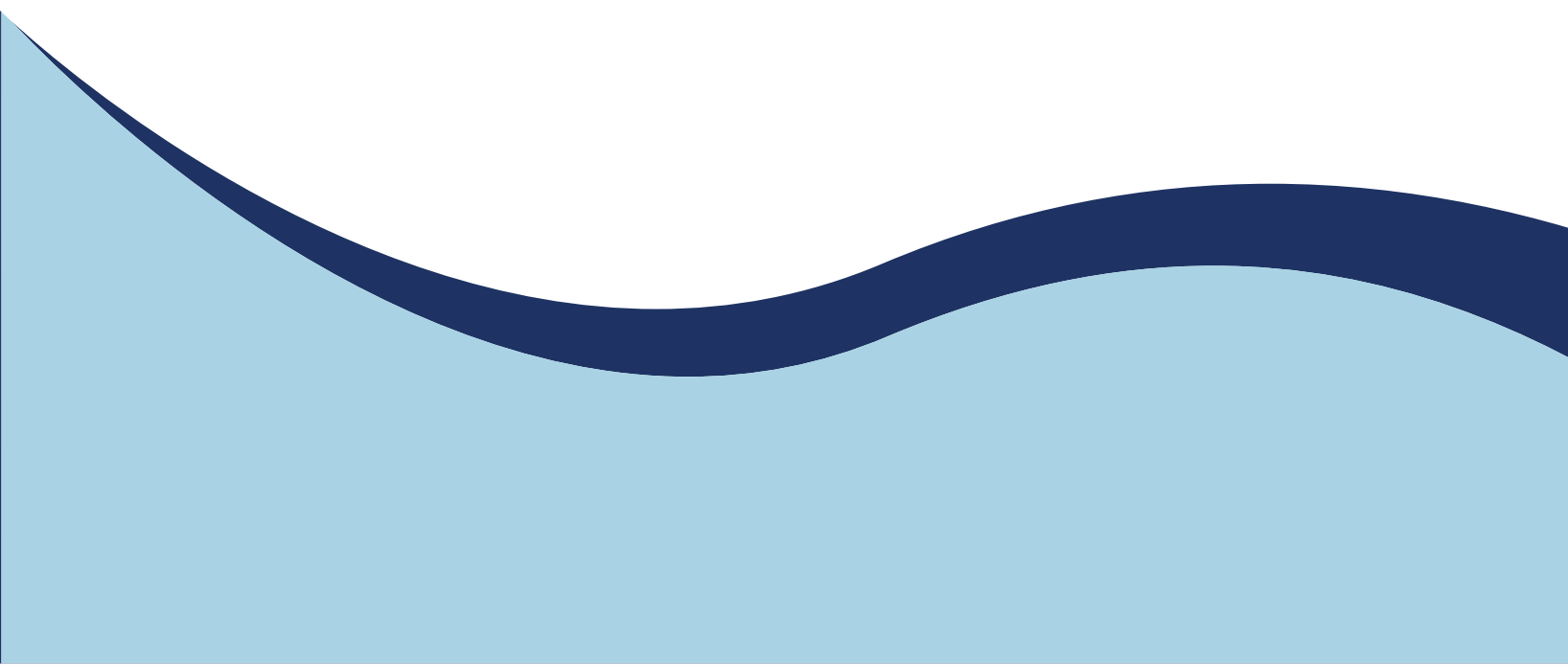
THE PONY CLUB'S POLICY
& GUIDELINES

PONY
CLUB



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Equine Welfare Policy

1.0 Introduction

The Pony Club is fully committed to ensuring the horses and ponies within the care of its Members and our Linked Riding Centre partners are given the best possible welfare standards not only at its events, but in everything its Members do.


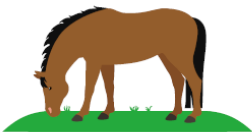

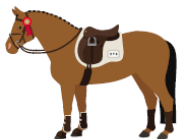


Welfare is and will remain at the heart of all decision making within The Pony Club.

The Pony Club has agreed to act in accordance with the British Equestrian Federation Charter for the Horse which outlines the ethical treatment of the horses in our care, sport and leisure.



THE CHARTER FOR THE HORSE

As responsible members of the equestrian community, we pledge to this charter for the ethical and fair treatment of all horses and other equids under our care.

 <h3>Empathy</h3> <p>Recognising horses are intelligent and emotional beings, we always prioritise their mental and physical health and overall wellbeing.</p>	 <h3>Care</h3> <p>Throughout their entire life, during exercise and rest, we offer horses a secure and suitable setting to create positive experiences that address their social, behavioural, nutritional and physical needs for a high quality of life.</p>	 <h3>Respect</h3> <p>Through compassionate, mindful, patient and empathetic interaction, we foster positive relationships with horses based on trust and respect.</p>
 <h3>Consideration</h3> <p>Each horse is an individual, and we strive to understand and meet their specific needs, including how they learn. We don't push horses beyond their health, fitness or ability levels, and we never let competitive or commercial influences compromise their welfare.</p>	 <h3>Ethics</h3> <p>In all our equine interactions, whether for leisure, training or sport, we adhere to the highest standards of equine welfare, safety, equipment, veterinary care and biosecurity, always guided by ethical principles.</p>	 <h3>Learning</h3> <p>Through continuously improving our equine knowledge, we evolve our behaviours based on education and informed advice from qualified professionals and the broader equestrian community.</p>

We know that horses and ponies are sentient beings. This means that they have the capacity to experience positive and negative feelings such as pleasure, joy, pain and distress. In recent years, research has given us more insight into how we can provide them with more positive, and fewer negative experiences. This means that we need to move away from a number of traditional training and management practices that are now known to be inappropriate. The Pony Club aims to educate and raise awareness about methods of care and training that support the welfare of our equine partners.

The Pony Club's aim is to support and educate Members to give all horses and ponies a fulfilled and well-lived life. This means ensuring they are in good health, properly nourished, adequately sheltered, are free from pain, fear and distress, and have the opportunity to express natural behaviour, all of which benefit both their mental and physical wellbeing.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Equine Welfare Guidelines which offers advice to Members and their Parents/Guardians, Officials and Coaches and highlights the rules and expectations The Pony Club has in place to support this policy.

2.0 Aim

The aim of this policy and accompanying guidelines is to provide all Members, Coaches, and Supporters with a clear understanding of how to meet the expectations of The Pony Club and the wider community and to outline the support they can expect from The Pony Club in return. (²Parents/Guardians, Volunteers, Officials and Staff.)

3.0 Objective

The objective of this policy is to safeguard the health and wellbeing of all horses and ponies involved in Pony Club activities. This is achieved through the implementation of clear policies, guidance, rules, and accountability, along with the promotion of good horsemanship, through effective training at all levels which are aligned with the core values of The Pony Club.

4.0 How is the Equine Welfare Policy Embedded within The Pony Club?

This policy is integrated and embedded within The Pony Club through education and training and through setting a positive example. It is a requirement of The Pony Club that all Members, those who look after their horses and ponies and those accompanying Members to events, Coaches and Supporters, are familiar with this policy and the actions required of them to comply with it.

The Equine Welfare Policy is embedded within The Pony Club through:

a. Training

Within its structure, The Pony Club, as a training organisation, prides itself on delivering high quality training that is relevant, and industry recognised.

Taking a proactive and consistent approach to rules and training, means that all Members are given a similar level of training and understanding which includes vital elements like equine welfare.

The industry-recognised, long-standing training and assessment system is used to educate and mentor Members in all aspects of horsemanship. Updated syllabuses include a range of topics designed to develop the skills and knowledge required to understand the complex welfare needs of horses and ponies. Crucially, the system **promotes a culture of putting welfare above competition and personal gain**. All Members should be actively encouraged to engage with all elements of training, particularly those directly related to horse and pony welfare.

Welfare scientists are continually finding out more about what horses and ponies need to live a good life. Good horsemanship involves keeping up to date with this new knowledge and, to the best of our ability, putting it into practice, ensuring that our horses and ponies are happy and content, and focusing on whether they understand and are willing to do what we ask, rather than acting through pain, or fear of reprimand.

b. Achievement Badges

Many of The Pony Club achievement badges are geared towards not only physical welfare, but also to the way horses and ponies learn and how they should be treated, so that they thrive and are happy. Working with our partners at the Blue Cross, The Pony Club has developed an Equine Welfare Badge which is awarded to Members who have completed ten achievement badges which are associated with the care and welfare of horses and ponies. Partnerships such as these continue to be a priority for The Pony Club, ensuring the equine industry works together to share best practice and learn from each other.

c. Codes of Conduct

The Pony Club codes of conduct are designed to ensure that all parties conduct themselves appropriately. Ensuring the wellbeing and welfare of horses and ponies is included in all codes of conduct and as such it is expected that Members, Coaches and Supporters ensure their horses and ponies are given the best possible welfare standards.

d. Rules of The Pony Club

The Rules of The Pony Club are designed not only to create an even playing field, but also aims to create an environment that offers the highest possible standards of horse and pony welfare. Rules are also in place to avoid any actions or oversights which might compromise equine welfare. Please refer to The Pony Club Handbook and the Health & Safety, Safeguarding and Horse Welfare rulebooks for more details.

e. Meetings and Communication

All Branch, Linked Centre, Area and Sports Committees, relevant Advisory Committees, Management and Trustees must include a Welfare section in their meeting agendas, ensuring that any updates or concerns are discussed and addressed.

f. Accountability and Intervention

The Pony Club has robust systems in place to ensure that any disregard for the welfare of horses and ponies belonging to, or being cared for by, its Members is reported and addressed appropriately.

All Officials are responsible for ensuring that this policy is observed and complied with.

Any behaviour or practice that could cause physical or mental suffering will not be tolerated. Individuals found to be deliberately breaching The Pony Club Welfare Rules will be subject to

disciplinary procedures. In extreme cases, where the welfare of a horse or pony is at serious risk, we may need to seek assistance from equine rescue charities and the police.

As a training organisation, where a welfare concern is raised, the initial intervention will focus on providing appropriate support and re-training. If this approach fails, sanctions may be considered and, as a last resort, arbitration and exclusion from The Pony Club may be deemed appropriate.

Formal complaints regarding horse welfare are dealt with in accordance with the Resolving Complaints Policy, which can be found on The Pony Club website. Riders and their Parents/Guardians at rallies or competitions who breach welfare rules may be reported using the Rider Report Card system, also available on The Pony Club website.

5.0 How to Raise a Welfare Concern

The Pony Club takes concerns about welfare very seriously. Members, Supporters and the public should feel confident that any concerns raised regarding welfare are taken seriously, dealt with fairly, appropriately, and recorded accurately.

In the first instance, if the concern is not urgent, the Branch District Commissioner or Centre Proprietor should be contacted to discuss the matter. If this initial approach fails to resolve the concern, then the help of the Area Representative or Centre Coordinator should be enlisted.

If an individual wishes to contact someone outside their Branch or Centre, they may email equinewelfare@pcuk.org, where their concern may be handled anonymously.

6.0 Regular Review

The Pony Club handles complaints and learning opportunities in a positive and pro-active manner and expects resolutions and outcomes to contribute to a process of continuous improvement. This is achieved through reviewing and updating policies of all Members, Coaches, Officials and Staff and keeping syllabuses current, updating them as necessary, so everyone is working with the most up to date literature and research.

Working with equine industry partners, The Pony Club will regularly review the Welfare Policy and associated Guidelines to ensure they reflect latest industry research, understanding and best practice. So, ensuring that as a leading youth organisation, The Pony Club steers young people, and Supporters through careful training, mentorship, and leadership, **ensuring equine welfare is always at the forefront of everything we do.**

Equine Welfare Guidelines

The Pony Club's Equine Welfare guidelines are designed to assist Members, Parents/Guardians, Coaches, Volunteers, Officials, and Staff in caring for horses and ponies as sentient beings, prioritising their welfare, protecting their physical and emotional wellbeing, and encouraging compassionate, respectful and responsible care.

The guidelines should be read alongside The Pony Club Manual of Horsemanship to ensure all aspects of care and management are covered.

The Five Domains: The Five Domains of Animal welfare is the most recent evolution of the five freedoms. The Five Domains approach adopts a holistic view of animal welfare, ensuring that both mental wellbeing and physical welfare are central to decision-making, with a focus on providing positive experiences.



Structured around the Five Domains, The Pony Club's Equine Welfare Guidelines aim to:

- Highlight **the Rules and Expectations** of The Pony Club and what you must do to comply with them.
- Explain what **Coaches and Officials should monitor and support with**, so they know what to look out for and how to support Members and Supporters.
- Provide **Husbandry and care guidance** on the general care and management of horses, to achieve optimal physical health and mental wellbeing.

NUTRITION



All horses and ponies should be fed and watered appropriately to ensure good health and wellbeing.

Rules and Expectations:

- **Water** – All horses and ponies attending Pony Club organised events should travel with water. Water should be offered throughout the event and, if travelling for long periods, during the journey as well.
- **Feed** - The period of time horses and ponies are not able to access forage should be no more than four hours. Provision should be made to allow horses and ponies to eat forage at appropriate intervals during a rally or event.
- **Weight** - Failure to address weight issues for horses and ponies breaches the welfare policy.



Please refer to individual rulebooks for further details on rules.

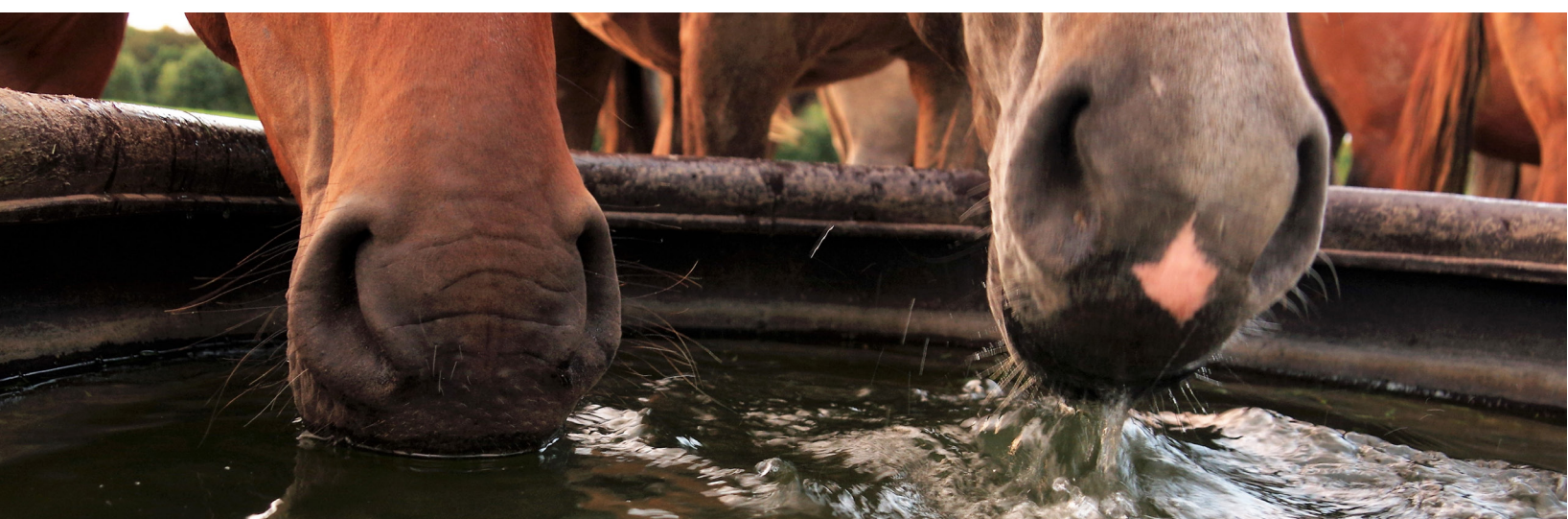
Coaches and Officials should monitor and support with:

- Signs of ill health that may have a dietary cause, like diarrhoea or a poor coat.
- Be vigilant for signs of dehydration especially on very hot days.
- Body fat condition should be between 2.0 to 3.0 out of 5. If a horse or pony is outside of these scores, support the Member to adjust feeding and management. For further information about condition scoring, please see www.worldhorsewelfare.org/ and search for: Is your horse the right weight.

Husbandry and care guidance:

- Feed good quality feed that is appropriate to the weight, type, breed and level of exercise of the horse or pony. Both over and under feeding can have a negative effect on health and welfare.
- **Most of the diet should come from forage** — such as grass, hay, haylage, chaff, or a hay replacer, which they should have regular access to throughout the day and night. Horses and ponies should never be left without food for more than four hours.
- Grazing on pasture or eating other forage, such as hay or haylage, provides essential nutrition and allows horses to enjoy natural behaviours like chewing, foraging, and browsing. **This has a positive effect on both their physical and mental wellbeing.**

- **Horses and ponies like to browse** for different plants, so allowing them to have access to safe hedgerows or providing safe small branches from trees such as willow or hazel to chew and enjoy, will improve wellbeing.
- Depending on workload, body fat condition score, and health conditions, additional feed may be needed alongside forage.
- For forage only diets, it is sensible to feed a vitamin and mineral balancer to aid metabolic functions and ensure that they are not deficient in key micronutrients.
- Good doers on restricted grazing need suitable alternative forage to ensure they receive sufficient fibre. They also require a low calorie source of vitamins and minerals which can be supplied in the form of supplement or balancer.
- Understand and manage the feeding of supplements carefully. Some may contravene competition rules and some are not suitable for all ages and types of horses and ponies. If in doubt about nutrition or bodyweight, consult a qualified equine nutritionist or your vet.
- Make changes to the diet gradually.
- Seek veterinary advice to manage any metabolic conditions like EMS or PPID (formerly known as Cushing's Disease).
- Feed from clean, safe feed bowls, nets and buckets.
- Make sure horses and ponies have a small amount of high fibre feed in their stomach before exercise and travel.
- **Clean, fresh water should always be available.** It should be checked at least once a day. Take note of your horse/pony's normal intake so you can monitor it at times when intake might be affected, such as in very hot or cold conditions.



ENVIRONMENT



Horses and ponies should have a species-appropriate living environment where they feel safe, are free from danger, have access to adequate shelter and gives them the benefit of **forage, freedom and friends**. Horses and ponies are herd animals, and as such need company, which should ideally be from other horses and ponies.

Rules and Expectations:

- During camps and stay-away competitions, which is far removed from their normal home environment, ensure horses and ponies' welfare and wellbeing remain a priority. Where usual routines, social contact, or freedom of movement are limited, steps should be taken to minimise stress and manage any signs of upset.

Always remember to put welfare ahead of competition and personal gain.

Please refer to individual rulebooks for further details on rules.

Coaches and Officials should monitor and support with:

- Appropriate provision for horses and ponies at all organised events.
- Good quality, safe riding surfaces, and equipment that is suitable for the activity.
- Making sure horses and ponies do not become too hot or cold.

Husbandry and care guidance:

The environment where horses and ponies are kept should provide:

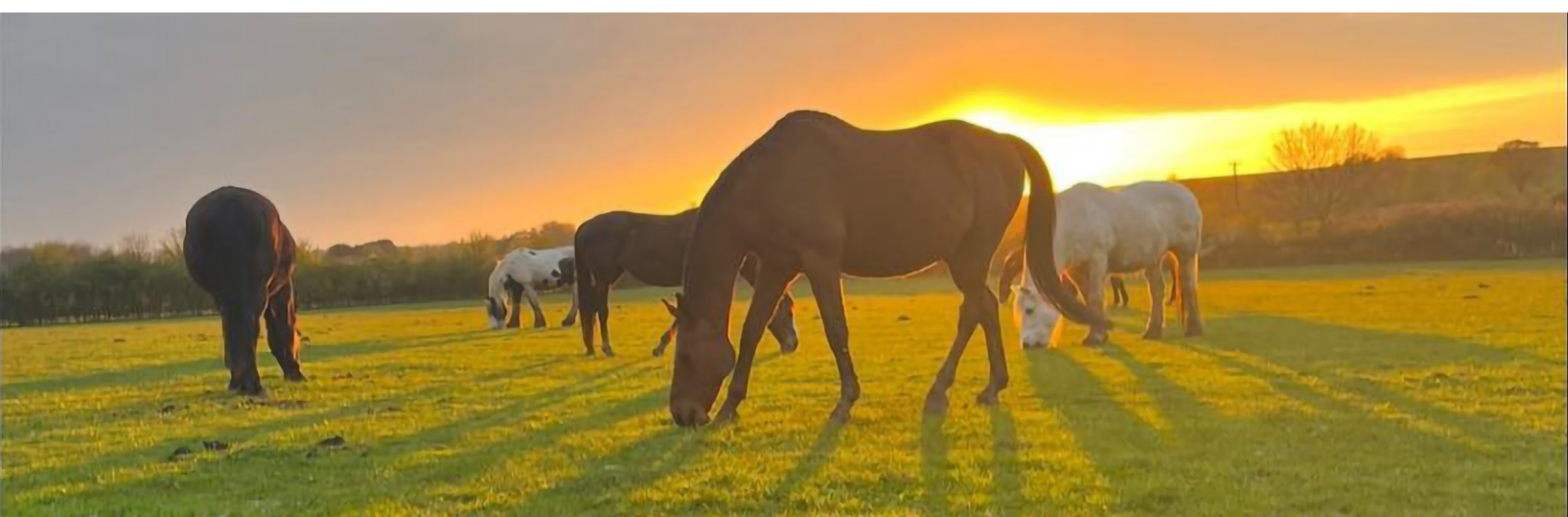
- o A natural environment where they can **freely move, graze and forage**. If turnout is not available, hand grazing or free exercise should be offered.
- o Enrichment.
- o Protection from inclement weather.

It should also:

- o Be safe and clear of hazards that could cause injury.
- o Be free from poisonous plants.
- o Be of an appropriate size for the numbers using it.
- Fencing should be species specific, safe, and fit for purpose.
- Well maintained pasture and surfaces, with regular dropping removal or harrowing and paddock rotation.



- Stables and shelters should be of suitable size with good ventilation and have clean, suitable bedding with constant access to forage and water. If possible, stables and fields should allow **access to other horses or ponies**. Ideally they should be able to touch each other, even when stabled separately, and have space to move away to avoid conflict.
- Rugs should be used as necessary to give warmth and protection, but care should be taken not to over rug the horse or pony because this can cause unnecessary stress, and does not help the horse or pony if they are prone to weight gain. Rugs should be removed and checked daily.
- **Good quality sleep is essential** for the body to rest and recuperate. Horses and ponies sleep for several short periods during the day and night. It is important to provide a suitable location and bedding, whether inside or outside where **horses and ponies feel safe**, so they can get good quality sleep.
- Ideally the horses and ponies living environment should allow them to resolve their own stress, so if they are too hot, they can move to the shade, or thirsty they can go and drink.
- When travelling to events, ensure boxes and trailers are safe, properly maintained and have enough space and ventilation.
- **Travelling to an event** where there is a **substantial change** to their normal environment could have a major impact on **stress levels, wellbeing, sleep, diet and health**. For example, if they normally live out, or are turned out daily, but need to be stabled for several days at a competition, this should be considered when making plans for such events.
- Long journeys should allow regular rest breaks where water should be offered. They should be given time to recover from a long journey before being exercised or competed.



HEALTH



Preventing disease and recognising signs and symptoms of ill health and pain in horses and ponies is key to keeping them happy and healthy.

Rules and Expectations:

- All horses and ponies must be vaccinated in accordance with The Pony Club vaccination policy.
- Do not trim the sensory hairs around the mouth, nose, eyes or inner ear.
- A horse or pony used at PC rallies and events must be at least four years of age. In their first eligible year, they must NOT be less than 48 months old. Please note some sports require horses to be older to compete, please check the individual rulebooks.
- Tack and equipment must fit properly and comply with all sports rules.
- Do not ride a horse or pony that is lame due to pain, injury or abnormality.
- Do not cause pain, discomfort or stress during handling, general riding, training or competition.
- Do not use any piece of equipment such as a bit, noseband, whip or spurs in a way that leads to injury, stress, pain or discomfort.
- Whips and spurs can be used to enhance your aids, but never as a punishment or in anger. **Permission is required to use spurs.** Riders should be aware of the full welfare implications associated with the use of spurs and be able to demonstrate how to ride correctly whilst wearing them. Please refer to The Pony Club Spur Rule.
- **The Rider Report Card** can be used to address unacceptable behaviour at any Pony Club events, serving as a tool to help guide and re-train and if necessary, reprimand Members.
- In the absence of industry-approved guidance, The Pony Club encourages ongoing discussion and careful consideration to ensure a horse or pony is suitably mounted.
- **The combined weight of the rider and equipment, including tack, should never exceed 20% of the horse or pony's body weight.**

If any of the factors listed below are present, the consideration should be given to a reduction in the percentage ratio:

If the horse/pony:

- o is displaying signs of difficulty carrying their rider.



- o is over or underweight (an optimal body condition score should be between 2.0 and 3.0, see appendix 1).
- o has a history of musculoskeletal pain (e.g., requires joint injections, has had back pain, has PSSM, etc.).
- o is not fit.
- o is under seven or over sixteen years of age.

Or if:

- o The rider is over-height, even if within an appropriate weight range.
- o The rider does not have a secure, independent seat.
- o The saddle has not been checked in the past six months by a qualified saddle fitter.
- o The workload is intense (e.g., lasting over an hour and requiring significant strength or stamina).
- o Weather conditions are likely to place additional strain on the horse (e.g., extreme heat).

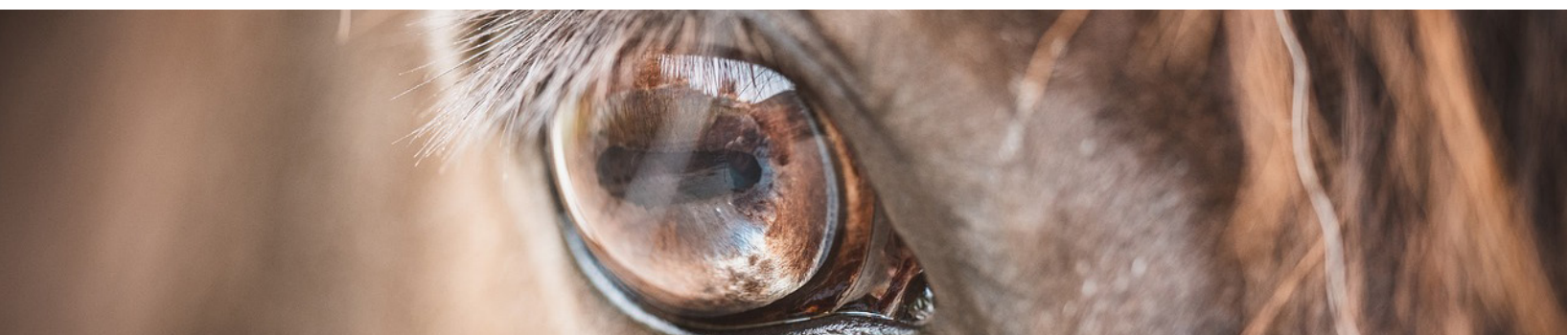
All Pony Club Officials and Coaches should assess whether a horse or pony is suitably mounted. If they believe the horse or pony is struggling or showing signs of distress, physically and/or mentally, they have the right to raise concerns.

Please refer to the **Support Guide for Coaches and Officials: Is the Rider Suitably Mounted?** Please refer to sports rulebooks for specific weight rules.

- The Pony Club Biosecurity Policy must be observed, and its advice and guidance must be followed.

Whether at a rally or competition, the decision of The Pony Club Coach, Volunteer, or Official is final. If they believe the safety or welfare of a Member or horse/pony has been or is at risk of being compromised in any way, they have the authority to stop and remove them. Failure to respect their decision is considered a breach of the Members'/Parents' Code of Conduct.

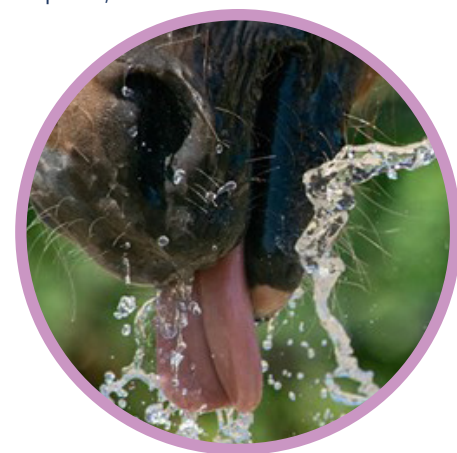
Please refer to The Pony Club Handbook and individual rulebooks for further details on rules.



What Coaches and Officials should monitor and support with:

- The horse or pony should not be allowed to participate or continue if there are any signs of lameness, discomfort, unusual lethargy, unwillingness to participate, stress or fear.
- The intended workload should not exceed the horse/pony's ability, for its age, size, strength and fitness.
- Any signs of illness, dull coat, being tucked up, uninterested behaviour, pain, aggression, an adverse reaction to being girthed, or unwillingness to lift a foot when asked are all signs that should not be ignored.
- Poor farriery or lack of care of the foot should be addressed.

Any ill-fitting tack or equipment should be highlighted, and a request made for a professional to check it.

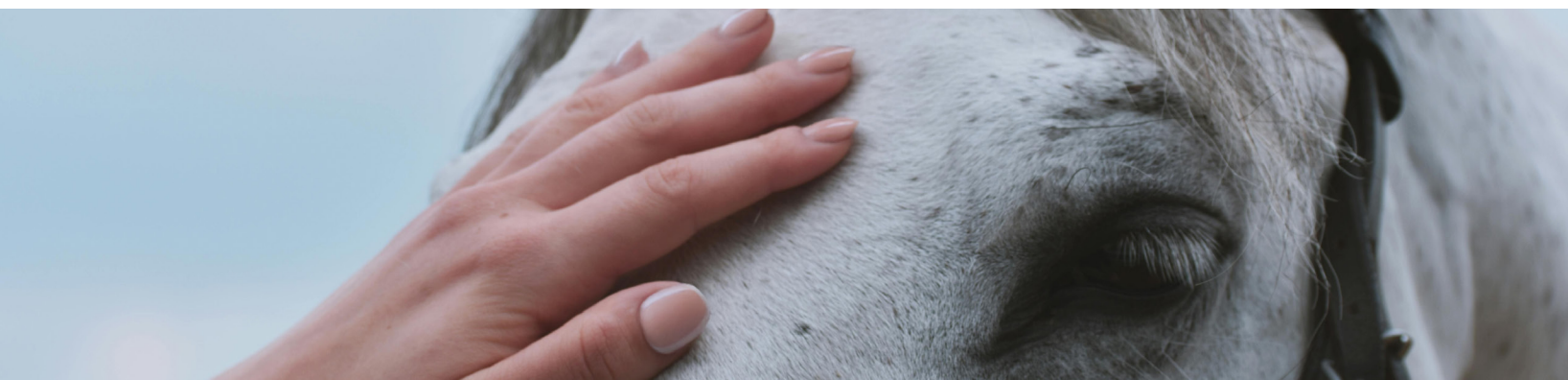


Husbandry and care guidance:

- **All horses and ponies need routine preventative health care** to keep them at optimum health. It is sensible to have a health plan which keeps a record of all routine health care. It is a useful way of ensuring their needs are met. This may include:
 1. Vaccination records
 2. Hoof care
 3. De-worming programmes
 4. Preventive physical care (like Physiotherapy and other professional physical therapies)
 5. Tack checks for both saddle and bridle, inc. the bit.
 6. Dental care
 7. Weight monitoring
 8. Temperature and respiratory rate checks
 9. Pre-existing conditions
 10. Regular medicines
 11. Feeding schedules
 12. Daily routines
 13. Cleaning and disinfecting schedules
 14. Pasture management plan

It is strongly advised that all professional equine practitioners used are registered with an appropriate professional regulatory body. They will be able to advise on the frequency of visits required to ensure all preventive measures are put in place to optimise your horse/pony's health and wellbeing.

- Carry out a check at least twice daily, and ensure they are their normal self and have no injuries.
- **Know their 'normal'** movement patterns, appetite and demeanour.
- It is very important for horses and ponies to be able to have **daily turnout** or exercise, not only for their physical health, but also for their mental wellbeing.
- **Recognising signs of stress, pain, and discomfort in horses and ponies** can be challenging, as their cues are often subtle and not always clearly linked to the source of the problem. These can range from subtle signs like wrinkled nostrils to more obvious actions, such as bucking or rearing, along with many other behaviours in between.
- Remembering to **'listen to the whispers, so they don't need to shout'** is really important. Subtle signs of pain, fear, stress and discomfort can be easily overlooked.
- The use of **medicines**, such as NSAIDS (Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) like phenylbutazone (Bute) or Paracetamol, should be carefully considered and should only be used under veterinary supervision. Its purpose should never be to mask lameness or enable them to carry on ridden work if it causes pain or discomfort. However, if an older pony thrives on having a job and enjoys an occasional trip out to a low-level rally and needs some support to ease some mild soreness to old joints, the use of anti-inflammatory drugs can be beneficial. This should be done transparently with the involvement of veterinarians and Branch DC/Centre Proprietor. This advice does not apply to competition, or horses and ponies in medium or hard work.
- **Effective biosecurity** at home and when out and about is a key component to keeping horses and ponies healthy. This includes keeping safe distances apart, not allowing nose sniffing and not sharing tack or equipment with unfamiliar horses/ponies. Please refer to The Pony Club's Biosecurity Policy for more information.



BEHAVIOURAL INTERACTIONS



How horses and ponies interact with humans, their environment, and other horses **significantly affects their physical and mental wellbeing**. As our understanding of horses' and ponies' needs has grown, so too has our responsibility to act on that knowledge. We must put their interests first, making sure they are happy and content, that they understand and are willing, rather than acting through pain, or fear of reprimand.

Rules and Expectations:

- Do not handle or ride in a manner that causes pain, fear or suffering.
- Do not allow a horse or pony to remain stressed without intervention.

Please refer to The Pony Club Handbook and individual rulebooks for further details on rules.

Coaches and Officials should monitor and support with:

- Addressing signs of stress at rallies and competitions.
- Supporting Parents and Guardians with new ways of training and working, and sign post them to further training and understanding.
- Making sure rallies and training incorporate the new training syllabuses and if Members demonstrate the use of any outdated training methods, using these as opportunities to educate them and their Parents/Guardians about why The Pony Club no longer supports them.

Husbandry and care guidance:

Interactions with humans

- In order to learn and understand, **horses and ponies need clear and consistent training** and expectations of their behaviour. If aids and boundaries are inconsistent, it leads to confusion, frustration and unpredictability. This may lead to a horse or pony trying to escape or fight, and finally give up, which is known as learned helplessness.
- Riding and training methods should not include punishment or cause pain or discomfort. It should always be humane. **Punishment has been shown to frighten and confuse horses and ponies**, weakening the bond between them and their rider. A frightened, confused horse or pony can quickly become dangerous and unpredictable.
- **Behave calmly around horses.** Don't rush a horse or pony who is unsure or get angry and frustrated with them. Remain calm, gently reinforce the desired behaviour and then repeat.



- The use of outdated terms such as 'lazy', 'naughty', 'stubborn', 'kick them', should not be used to describe unwanted behaviour or the treatment of horses and ponies. If someone uses these terms, they may be outdated in their understanding and knowledge.
- Allow horses and ponies to **show interest in things and explore their environment**. Give them time to sniff, look, and touch new things, and allow them time to explore and accept them. This will help **build a bond of trust** and allow them to explore and understand the world around them.
- Regular grooming not only keeps their coat healthy, but it is also a good way to bond with them and get them used to being handled. Scratching places where other horses or ponies would mutually groom further helps with bonding and creates positive experiences.

Interactions with the environment

- Try to keep horses and ponies turned out on grass as much as possible. This gives them access to the friends, forage and freedom that is known to support equine welfare.
- Giving horses and ponies agency, means that they have a freedom to choose for themselves when and how they do things, like drink, graze and browse, exercise and play, rest and sleep.
- If full time turnout is not possible, management should maximise freedom of choice and agency, by enabling meaningful social contact, movement, and foraging opportunities.
- This may include group housing or turnout, track systems, or well-designed social stabling.
- In all settings, appropriate enrichment should be provided (natural or artificial), recognising that enrichment is only effective if the horse actively engages with it.
- **A Stereotypical behaviour** such as weaving, wind-sucking, crib-biting, or box/fence walking may **indicate poor or compromised welfare**, so try hard to identify the cause and remove or find a remedy. These undesirable behaviour patterns can be developed from many things, such as stress, pain, boredom, confusion, frustration, fear, isolation, extended confinement, insufficient access to forage, and inappropriate or insufficient exercise.



Interactions with other animals

- All horses and ponies should be able to **interact closely with each other**, be turned out together, or at least be able to mutually groom each other over the fence.
- Horses and ponies kept in groups should have sufficient room to move away from potential conflict.



MENTAL EXPERIENCES



As sentient beings, horses and ponies can have both **positive and negative mental experiences** from the way they are treated and cared for. Recognising the importance of this is essential to ensuring their ongoing welfare and wellbeing.



Rules and Guidance:

- All Pony Club Members, Supporters, Officials and Staff are expected to follow the Welfare Policy and these supporting guidelines. Welfare must always be at the forefront of all decisions, training, care, husbandry and horsemanship, taking a **'Pony Centred Approach'** to everything we do.
- **Horses and ponies should be treated as individuals;** one size does not always fit all.

Please refer to The Pony Club Handbook and individual rulebooks for further details on rules.

Coaches and Officials should monitor and support with:

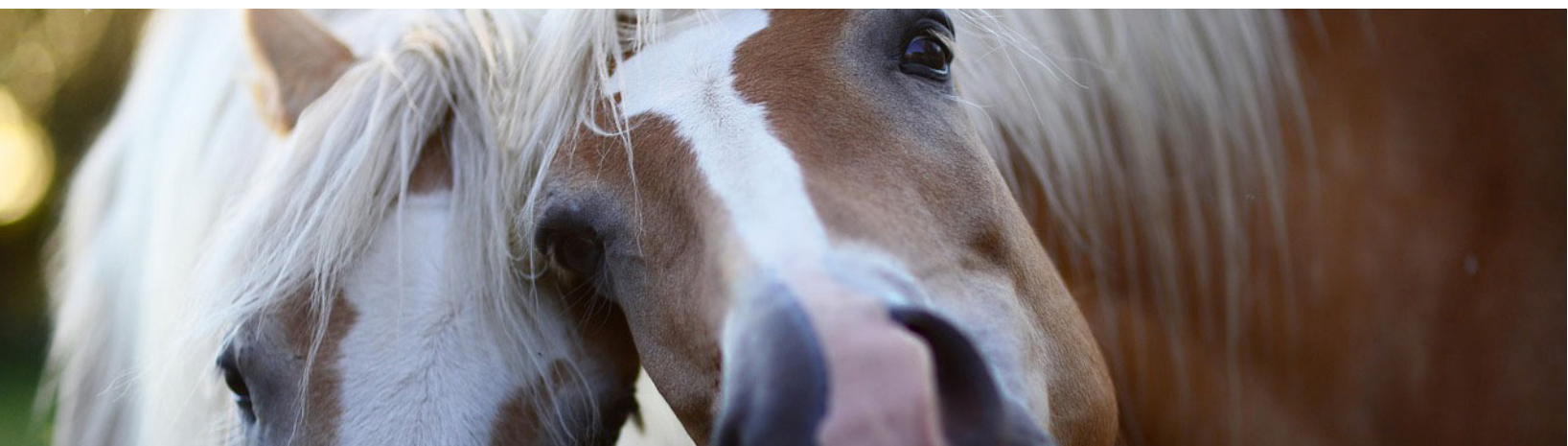
- Avoid overworking that can lead to stress, negative mental experiences, injury and fatigue.
- Behaviour such as bucking, rearing, bolting, or repeated spooking should not be ignored. This type of behaviour is not only unsafe, but also a welfare issue, because it can be a sign of a medical or psychological problem.
- Use The Pony Club training syllabuses and guidance notes to assist with training. New concepts and training take time to bed in. Use negative situations as learning experiences, support Members and Supporters to make good choices, and always remember to keep **welfare at the forefront of everything we do.**
- Verbal and physical abuse from anyone is not acceptable, including shouting and swearing at animals (or children). It is a breach of the Codes of Conduct and can lead to disciplinary action.

Husbandry and care guidance:

- We should always seek to **provide positive experiences** and give horses and ponies **a good life.**
- Remove physical and mental suffering by minimising negative experiences and resolve them when they arise.
- If negative experiences are not addressed, they will, over time, become chronic and compromise their welfare and wellbeing.

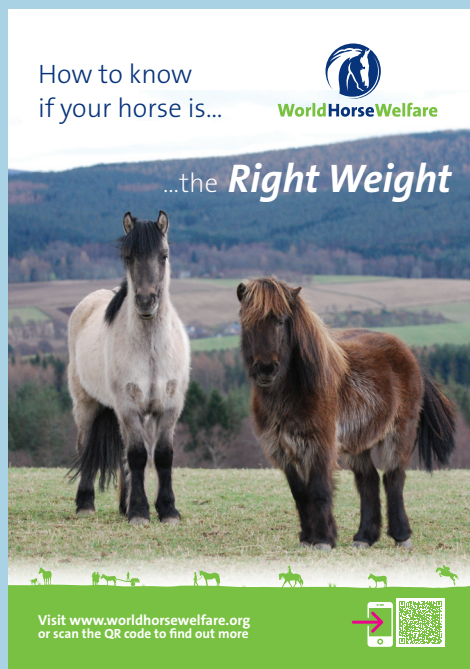
- The living conditions and treatment of horses and ponies should not impose mental suffering. Instead, it should give them positive experiences and give them things that matter to them, such as:
 - **Eating when they are hungry, foraging and browsing**; provide an interesting and stimulating diet. Removing the ability to chew can lead to stress, physical and mental harm and stereotypical behaviours.
 - Drinking when they are thirsty.
 - Have space to exhibit natural behaviour, to **roam, play and exercise**.
 - **Have company of their own kind** - It is important that they can see, touch and mutually groom each other. If they cannot be kept together, grooming over a fence or the company of another animal is beneficial.
 - **Feeling safe** - a horse or pony that is alone may be more vigilant, meaning sleep, stress and relaxation will be greatly affected resulting in higher levels of stress. If they have to be kept alone, consider providing them with a companion from another species. However, for an animal that evolved as a prey species living in the safety of a herd, nothing substitutes for the company of another equine.
 - Have **shade and shelter** when needed, and ideally the choice of when to use it.
- Remember, you may only spend a few hours with your horse or pony each day. What are they doing during the rest of the time? **Are their physical and mental needs being met during the hours you aren't there?**
- Positive experiences lead to a positive state of mental wellbeing, meaning they are more likely to thrive, and also cope when a negative experience arises.
- Training clearly, consistently, and **free from fear and pain** will improve mental security and the bond between them and their human. **Always end training on a positive note.**
- Train them to face everyday stresses, such as loading, standing, lifting their legs, etc., so that handling them does not create any increased stress.

Always remember to put welfare ahead of competition and personal gain.



Appendix 1 - How to know if your horse is the right weight.

Visit www.worldhorsewelfare.org/ and search for:
Is your horse the right weight.



Do you have a concern for the welfare of a horse or pony?

In the first instance, if the concern is not urgent, and you are happy to do so, contact the Branch District Commissioner or Centre Proprietor to discuss the matter. If this initial approach fails to resolve the concern, then the help of the Area Representative or Centre Coordinator should be enlisted.

www.pcuk.org/equine-welfare

If you wish to contact someone outside of your Branch or Centre, please contact equinewelfare@pcuk.org where your concern may be dealt with anonymously.

Do you have an Equine Welfare Concern?



Are you worried about a horse or pony, and would like to report or discuss your concerns?

BRANCH/CENTRE:

ORGANISERS NAME:

PHONE:

EMAIL:

Head Office Contact:
equinewelfare@pcuk.org

02476 698300

In the event of an emergency, please contact your local equine charity

Please remember that welfare always comes ahead of competition and personal gain



EQUINE WELFARE

THE PONY CLUB'S POLICY
& GUIDELINES



 pcuk.org

Email: equinewelfare@pcuk.org

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