

Driving Trust and Acceptance of Equestrian Sport in the UK

Summary of findings from the 2024 Voconiq research to aid the ongoing work and collaborative efforts of the UK equestrian sport industries

A research project coordinated by



WorldHorseWelfare

Collaborators:



Recommendations

Key Recommendations for the UK Equestrian Sport Industries

- 1 Demonstrate and promote competence, humanity, and integrity
- 2 Be accountable
- 3 Embrace (controlled) vulnerability
- 4 Develop clear narratives around horse fatalities
- 5 Emphasise best practice welfare
- 6 Highlight social value and economic contributions
- 7 Address perceptions of elitism and enhance accessibility
- 8 Develop awareness on euthanasia and ethical treatment
- 9 Increase public engagement
- 10 Engage regularly with stakeholders to ensure focus and progress
- 11 Engage with veterinarians and welfare groups

The Research

- Completed in 2024 by Engagement Science experts 
- Commissioned by World Horse Welfare in collaboration with equestrian sport organisations
- Primary funding provided by the Racing Foundation
- Nationally representative survey with 5,239 respondents
- The term 'horse sports' in this research covered dressage, show jumping, eventing, polo, endurance riding, horse racing, showing, vaulting, carriage driving, Pony Club activities, and recreational riding

Full report can be found at www.worldhorsewelfare.org

Trust Filters

UK Horse Sport Trust Filter: The primary drivers of trust identified in Voconiq's research are listed below. Investments, strategies, actions, and communications should line-up to what's important to the public.

Primary drivers of public trust	WELFARE OF THE HORSE	<p>Good welfare is a precondition of community and social acceptance of horse sports. Welfare to the public is complex and more than just preventing harm to horses – people want reassurance that a horse's whole life is rich, engaging, and dignified.</p> <p>Focus on: Evidence of work around both physical and mental health, treatment as sentient being.</p>
	SOCIAL IMPORTANCE	<p>How horse sports contribute to the social fabric of UK society.</p> <p>Focus on: Role in the community, provision of shared experiences, role in supporting education, economic and social benefits, positives of cultural tradition.</p>
	PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS	<p>Confidence that horse sports are listening to the public and responding to their concerns.</p> <p>Focus on: Speed in addressing known issues, listening and respecting community concerns, preparedness to change based on concerns, sharing actions and progress.</p>
	TRANSPARENCY INJURIES AND FATALITIES	<p>The level of transparency regarding horse injuries and fatalities that occur during training, racing, and competitive sport.</p> <p>Focus on: Provision of facts, evidence of work to identify and reduce avoidable risk and avoid harm.</p>
	REGULATION	<p>Confidence in regulation, standards, and governance mechanisms that underpin the industry to ensure horse sports 'do the right thing'.</p> <p>Focus on: High standards, clear and appropriate rules and regulations, transparency and accountability to wider public, ability for the Government to hold horse sports accountable.</p>
	DISTRIBUTIONAL FAIRNESS	<p>Understanding how wider society and individuals not involved in horse sports can and are benefitting from it.</p> <p>Focus on: The social investment activities by horse sports that have a positive impact in local communities and nationally.</p>

Additional drivers of acceptance (not identified as drivers of trust)

Breeding of horses for sports: The more people feel it is okay that horses are being bred for sports, the more they accept the industry. If there are negative perceptions around the breeding of horses, acceptance will wane.

Environmental impacts: This speaks directly to the community's level of acceptance of the spaces and land that horse sports facilities use, water usage, waste management, and impact on the environment, as well as the carbon footprint associated with long distance travel. Concerns can reduce acceptance.