

## **The British Horse Council – British Groom Association, Equestrian Employers Association Update**

### **Illegal Employment**

The BGA recently conducted a poll amongst grooms which resulted in an astonishing figure that **59%** of these employed grooms did not have a written contract with their employer.

What does this really mean?

- They are being illegally employed, and this not only means that the grooms have no security but neither do the employers.
- Their staff will probably not be enrolled in payroll, their tax and NI will not be registered and paid for, they won't be enrolled on any pension schemes and they will not be covered by any public or employer's liability.
- In addition contracts also allow for holiday time, sick pay, hours, wage brackets, grievance policies and also training capacity.

Without the above being in place,

- the industry is fuelling a desperate illegal situation putting equestrian employers at risk within the insurance market
- face investigation by HMRC, trading standards and health and safety government departments.

This will be damaging to all involved, even those that do operate within the law as insurance premiums will take a hit, reputations and recruiting into the industry and even corporate endorsements could be affected.

Of course, we cannot also ignore the impact on animal welfare.

Staff casually employed, with no job security or record of proper training and support are less likely to be able to deliver the highest possible standard of animal welfare and care.

If their needs are not being properly met, it can be assumed that the needs of the animals are also not being adequately met.

### **What can we do?**

We can positively reinforce that enrolling staff in proper employment is a benefit to their business and that with organisations such as the British Grooms Association and the Equestrian Employers Association doing so is pretty effortless as they can provide all the HR templates and resources needed including an online contract creator, staff handbook creator, legal assistance, payroll and pensions schemes available.

As the industry sector group we must all work together to promote a better standard of employment practise to form a coherent base to build on and support the proper animal welfare standards.

We would support, seeing the positive impacts of the REL changes in legislation promoting better employment and welfare standards, a move to encourage the licencing of livery yards in a similar manner.