



British Horse Council
Winter Meeting – Fri 13 December 2019
Nobel House, Smith Square, Westminster SW1P 3JR

Chairman's welcome – Tim Brigstocke

Introductions and apologies – Michael Seals, Jeanette Allen, Graeme Cooke, Helene Mauchlen, Debbie Dow, David Ingle, Natalie Meredith, Sue Goligher, Rachel Davis

Approval of previous meeting note and any matters arising - agreed with no matters arising

Notification of any AoB – Potters abattoir, Strangles Awareness Week

Disease updates and actions – Richard Newton

Updates provided on Equine Influenza, EVA and Strangles surveillance. Please see separate slides.

Advancing Equine Scientific Excellence – Alana Chapman

Please see separate slides.

British Horse Council update – David Mountford

1. Manifesto for the 2019 General Election [here](#)
2. Equine Database and ID. Data accuracy is poor because the current scenario of returning passports to the PIO has low uptake. Requirement for simple method by which owners can resolve inaccuracies and PIO engagement will be carried out in the New Year to explore potential solutions.
3. Fresh Semen Importation Documentation. Addressing the lack of clarity regarding the required documentation and documentation formats. [Latest info here](#)
4. Equine Viral Arteritis (EVA). Outbreaks in Devon, Dorset and Shropshire during 2019 exposed shortcomings within the EVA Order 1995. The Order limited the extent of the controls that could be implemented in relation to the EVA incidents in Dorset and Devon. The Shropshire case was discovered on pre-breeding screening and the owner elected to have the stallion castrated. BHC will work with Defra to review the 1995 Order.
5. Movements post-Brexit. Concern exists within the international TB industry over post-Brexit cross border movement of horses for training, breeding and sales. Considerable EU and Government engagement underway. [Current sitrep here](#)
6. Animal (Equine) Health and Welfare Pathway. See later in this report.

Additional points raised: 1) Concerns regarding pop up horse fairs and variable enforcement by Local Authorities. World Horse Welfare replied that they had submitted a Freedom of Information request to understand better which LAs focus on the enforcement of equine related regulation 2) Online chip checking with Digital Stable – the mechanism to do this is readily available and free of charge [here](#), the challenge is that horse owners can find their

horse's passport details online, but they cannot update their details online as it stands, they are required to return the passport to the Passport Issuing Organisation for updating. In reality very few people do this, therefore the data held by PIOs on equine ownership is very out of date. British Horse Council is working with Equine Register, Defra and PIOs (in early 2020) to find a solution that addresses this unsustainable reality 3) The British Horseracing Authority raised the matter of societal acceptance (or social licence) to carry out activities with horses. The ways in which horses are cared for in sport and racing environments have an active public following. BHA is aware of the concerns of members of the public and is continuing to take steps through its [Horse Welfare Board](#) to be open about providing evidence of the levels of care horses in racing benefit from and how risks in horse racing are being managed.

BHC new website – Jan Rogers

Demo provided. Please visit www.britishhorsecouncil.org for all BHC related information, open consultations and industry links

Defra update – Laura Bellingham

An update was provided on purdah and the current Election process which may result in a new Ministerial team which would require time to get up to speed post election. The issue of horse owner data accuracy held by PIOs was identified as a concern and that PIOs would be engaged on this in the New Year. Defra is looking at technical solutions for the identification of the specialist populations of semi wild horses so they can be properly identified in the field and officials are also reviewing how closely the UK could be aligned with EU Animal Health Law which comes into force in April 2021 and the extent to which equine ID can be electronic – please see:

https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/health/regulation_en

Defra has developed a virtual internal network for all those teams engaged on equine matters.

Livestock Identification Programme (LIP) Update – Tim Morris

The process has advanced considerably with a new company being formed, Livestock Information Ltd, a subsidiary company of Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board ([AHDB](#)) which has a remit to design and implement the Livestock Information Service (LIS). Updated Terms of Reference (ToR) will be created for Traceability Design User Group which includes two equine representatives (Jeanette Allen & Jan Rogers), and these will reflect the governance that has been established between Defra and AHDB to deliver the Livestock Information Programme (LIP). This will enable electronic identification and traceability of all kept animals, and horses will be onboarded later. Equine Register has won the contract for elements of the delivery of this service, and we can expect this system to underpin future equine ID on an electronic basis and support the Animal Health Law.

Licensing of Rescue & Rehoming Centres – Jessica Stark

The momentum behind this matter is driven by a need to have an approval register of all centres to be able to monitor their equine care in the face of a number of cases of badly-run centres, and individuals masquerading as rescue centres and which manifest severely compromised equine care and high levels of mortality. The British Horse Council supports the licensing of sanctuaries, rescue and rehoming centres – currently this area is completely

unregulated and equine charities are increasingly having to step in to rescue equines from inappropriately-run establishments.

It was noted that there was an evidence base of compromised welfare, more than suggesting a need for this process on <http://www.awnwales.org/>

The [National Equine Welfare Council](#) should be pivotal in the coordination of this process, in partnership with BHC.

World Horse Welfare survey through Facebook in autumn 2019 collected names of dozens of rescue organisations, and only 37% of respondents thought these organisations were well-run and a significant majority wanted licensing to help the public determine which organisations to support and trust.

Scotland has committed to licensing of sanctuaries and rehoming centres (for all animals) and it would be desirable to see the same promise from England and Wales.

Defra is currently at the early stages of evidence gathering process for licensing of sanctuaries and rehoming centres for cats, dogs and horses and some of the groups present will have been involved in the roundtables that took place in October 2019 in Bristol and York. These roundtables covered a wide variety of topics including which standards are realistically achievable, potential cost implications, resources (including staff training) and inspections. Concerns were raised about ensuring that centres were fully consulted in the development of this regulation and process, and indicated consensus that legislation and guidance should not be so onerous as to close-down those dedicated organisations that strive to offer vulnerable horses a better future, but to give them clear guidance and support on what they need to do to ensure they are protecting their welfare.

Expect that there will be a public consultation in February in England, which BHC and NEWC will endeavour to raise awareness of so all interested parties can respond to it.

World Horse Welfare will be engaging with as many sanctuaries and rehoming centres as possible to better understand the views, opportunities and concerns around licensing to help inform BHC and NEWC's position and ensure any proposed legislation is proportionate and unintended consequences are identified and addressed as far as possible. Important that all small sanctuaries, rescue and rehoming organisations to have their voices heard and to be included in the process.

Spread the word, take part in the public consultation and by all means contact World Horse Welfare or NEWC if you would like to speak with them directly about the idea or if you have questions or concerns.

Points noted to engage racehorse rehoming (which are self regulated) and invite NEWC to Speak to the Association of Cats & Dogs' Homes to set out a realistic set of requirements

14.40 Equestrian Trade update – Claire Williams

Please see separate report.

14.50 Racing & TB Industry – David Sykes/Claire Sheppard

Equine Welfare Strategy

The racing industry's Horse Welfare Board will be publishing a horse welfare strategy for the sport in the New Year that will illustrate how racing plans to lead the conversation about the participation of horses in sport and the high welfare standards which underpin this.

There are a number of projects in train already, including the setting up of a thoroughbred welfare database, a review of hurdle design, a thoroughbred welfare study to benchmark welfare standards, and a number of projects which will enhance the traceability of thoroughbreds. These include:

1. Working with sales houses on a campaign this autumn to raise awareness of the legal requirement to notify changes of ownership within 30 days, which has seen an improvement in compliance in the thoroughbred sector and will be repeated next year, and;
2. A review of the notification process when horses retire from racing. This will involve a change in the Rules of Racing early next year to make it a rule of racing that the BHA must be informed of the details of the responsible person when a horse leaves racing, and a new online process for trainers which will capture more information on its future at this critical point

Equine Influenza (EI) Vaccination

Going through an international consultation to harmonise the vaccination rules for EI across racing jurisdictions.

Codes of Practice 2020

The [2020 Codes of practice](#) are now available on the Levy Board website. The Codes set out voluntary recommendations to help breeders, in conjunction with their veterinary surgeons, prevent and control specific diseases in all breeds of horse and pony.

The changes to the Codes for 2020 include:

- New guidelines on EI
- Revisions to the Contagious Equine Metritis swabbing protocol
- Updates to the contact details relating to notifiable diseases
- Additions to the Equine Viral Arteritis section to reflect the 2019 outbreak
- The Codes can also be accessed via the [EquiBioSafe app](#).

15.0 Animal (Equine) Health and Welfare Pathway – Tim Morris

The aim is to develop a high level targets, applicable to animal health and welfare, to be achieved over a period of 10 years. Discussions will be facilitated by the [Animal Health & Welfare Board for England](#) to determine the actions to be carried out by Government and the actions to be carried out by industry. It is expected that the British Horse Council and the [Equine Disease Coalition](#) will be actively involved. One of the challenges to address is the status of the horse within the kept animal sector, including fully informed debates as to whether it is a food producing animal or a companion animal, or falls within another category. Important to note that any proposed changes to the current situation need to be fully explored in order to mitigate any consequences for existing regulation for planning, foodstuffs, excise etc. Keep this item on the agenda as the concept develops.

FAWC/AWC

The Farm Animal Welfare Committee has now become the [Animal Welfare Committee](#). The Committee is practical scientific committee which advises the Animal Health & Welfare Board, which in turn advises Government on policy development. There has been concern from some areas about the absence of detailed equine knowledge on the current Animal Welfare Committee and the extent of the evidence base in use. Chair of BHC will contact Chair of AWC to discuss to make use of the open door available for proactive engagement.

15.10 Equine obesity – Various contributors

Obesity in equines is a growing epidemic and a number of organisations met this morning to share the work they have underway and to agree to collaborate on future initiatives, a number of which were discussed and will be developed in follow-on activity. To keep up with the debate please [contact us](#)

15.20 Zootechnical update – Sue Goligher/Rachel Davis

Please see separate note

15.25 EU Animal Health Law - Matt Wells

- There hasn't been a great deal of movement on the Commission's part since the last meeting. They are yet to initiate much of the required legislation.
- Where there has been opportunity to comment and influence at the various stages of legislation we've taken these, including the public feedback periods such as with the Entry into the Union Act. We thank the British Horse Council's members for their views.
- Of the 21 pieces of AHR tertiary legislation, 2 acts have been published in the OJ (with a further implementing act to amend the disease list to be adopted), four delegated acts are pre-adoption and one has been adopted. This Act – on registration and ID - has been in an extended scrutiny period and is expected to pass at EP, though we don't yet know when. This is holding up work on the corresponding implementing act which Defra policy are keen to see the light of day. See list [here](#)
- Following our attendance at September's EU Commission Working Group, the UK submitted written comments on the draft implementing act on Union notification, reporting, the computerised information system, eradication programmes and disease-free status, with input from the Devolved Authorities. We are yet to receive any further invitations to Working Groups and requests to comment on draft Acts.
- A public feedback period on the Draft Act on approval of aquaculture establishments and traceability of aquatic animals just closed.
- We are carrying out a systematic analysis of the new legislation – where it is available – to plan for the future. 21 April 2021 is not far away and outside the EU it will take on an important context for our trading relationship.
- The Animal Health Regulation team plan to keep you in the loop and we intend to hold more regular Core-Industry Group meetings once things start to become clearer. The last one was in August and we were hoping that more would have emerged in the meantime which would have necessitated another one in the Autumn.

15.35 AoB

- Equine biosecurity behaviour change project – an update was provided about the collaborative charity engagement work and yard visits , selected behavioural interventions will be trialled in 2020 to determine which are the most effective
- Potters abattoir – recent fire at its processing plant in France resulted in closure of equine slaughter lines in the UK. Now reopened but accepting limited numbers. Concern regarding any backlog of horses and possibility of welfare concerns.
- Strangles Awareness week 2020 - [see here](#)
- A tribute was extended to [Chris House](#), renowned veterinary surgeon, who passed away recently

16.00 Close