

Report from Scotland for British Horse Council on December 13, 2024

Registration of Livery Yards

Scottish Government acknowledges that the recent consultation on licencing came out very strongly in support of the need to licence livery yards but given the pressures local authorities are under lacking funding, training, and staff early discussions with the 32 Scottish Local authorities are underway to explore the feasibility of introducing a registration scheme for Livery yards in their areas.

The rough proposal is registration would cost a nominal fee – to be determined by the local authorities - and registered yards would be published (endorsed) on the LA website and be expected to operate to standards set out in the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Equidae. (which is currently under review). Persons looking to secure livery provision for their horse will be able to refer to the published list enabling them to make an informed choice regarding livery providers. Livery providers failing to operate to the standards required by the code, face being removed from the list of registered business.

Scot Gov is exploring whether such a registration scheme can also be extended to dog groomers and commercial dog walkers. Some Scottish local authorities already implement voluntary dog walker registration schemes, and where they have done so, they see an improvement in the industry – unregistered ones don't get the business.

Riding Establishments Act

The current Riding Establishments Act is to be revoked in due course (no date given) and riding schools and the use of the horse for hire and reward may also become a licensable activity under The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Scotland) Regulations 2021

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2021/84/contents/made>

Scottish Government are keen to receive more and emerging examples/evidence of equines being used commercially other than being ridden, e.g. therapy, driving, on the ground, lessons and hacks on privately owned horses being offered for a fee or wedding and funeral hires.

Scottish Government are also keen to learn anything about the impact this broadening of the definition and modernising of the legislation could have on industry.

Scottish Government Code of Practice for the Welfare of Equidae

This is currently under review with the review being led by NEWC Scotland and involving representation from 25 organisations and businesses and some independents. We aim to update the out-of-date 15-year-old code and produce one that reflects modern equine welfare.

The Code provides a practical guide to owners and keepers with a duty of care for horses, ponies, donkeys and hybrids in Scotland. It sets out industry agreed principles relating to the care of equids which are designed to cover the differing management techniques required for the many circumstances in which animals are kept in Scotland.

The CoP should outline what a reasonable person should know to provide their equid with a reasonably quality of life (a life worth living).

Use in court - In cases of equine neglect where chargers are brought to court under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 legislation, the Equidae Code of Practice can be lodged by the Prosecution as a production of the court. This allows for the codes to be referred to in court by the Sheriff, Procurator Fiscal and the Defence agent to gain understanding and guidance into the requirements of the equines needs.

Six groups meeting currently are covering;

- Nutrition
- Environment
- Behavioural interactions and Mental state
- Health
- Transport and ID/Traceability
- Duty of Care

Equine ID

Over the summer the equine industry has been lobbying Jim Fairlie MSP Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity at both The Royal Highland Show and Blair Castle International Horse Trials. This is on top of us holding a very successful exhibition at the Scottish Parliament to highlight the importance of equine identification to the health and welfare of Scottish horses.

The trio of organisations (BHS, WHW and horsescotland) used the opportunity to urge MSPs to support an improved digitalised and enforceable equine ID system to ensure all horses are identifiable and traceable.

The team spoke to 56 MSPs over three days and were sponsored by Sharon Dowey, MSP for South Scotland. We were delighted that almost 50 percent of the current members of the Scottish Parliament spoke to us about the importance of equine identification to the health and welfare of Scotland's horses, ponies and donkeys. There must be a four nations approach on this so were heartened to hear our Scottish Ministers' openness to discussing a GB wide approach with counterparts in Defra and Wales and thank you to

the British Horse Council for keeping this fundamental welfare requirement to the fore in all four nations.

ScotEquine

The Scot Equine pilot over the last couple of years has been warmly welcomed and supported by the equine industry – uptake however has low because of the perilous unenforceable state of the current inadequate equine ID system – however the capacity of Scot Equine technology to help with digital traceability in the future and the work of ScotEID puts Scotland on a good footing and we welcome the current disease alerts on strangles and equine flu.