

NEWSLETTER

THE INSPECTORATE OF RIDING ESTABLISHMENTS

Issue 10 – January 2013

Finance and RE Committee – the way forward...

Discussions are ongoing between the RCVS, BVA and your committee as to the best way of restructuring our financial arrangements while continuing the valuable role of the veterinary inspectorate under the Riding Establishments Acts. At the time of writing no immediate change is envisaged. Watch this space!

COURSES AND STANDARDS

2012 was a big year for many of us. There were some 80 equine vets at Greenwich Park, including team and FEI vets, but mainly volunteers – doing equine vet work in Games Maker uniform was a surreal experience but luckily not to be repeated. Despite this, wearing the uniform – and some very “on message” training did create **standardisation**, which is quite alien in the rarefied equine veterinary world.

2012 also saw me take charge, luckily under the caring eyes of Diana Evans, of the Riding Establishment Training/Refresher courses. Two courses were held in the summer – one at Warwick racecourse and the other at Cumbernauld in Scotland. The feedback was good, as it has been in recent years, but we are always looking for improvement. It was felt that the Cumbernauld delegates benefited from being fewer in number, so individual queries and concerns (particularly with respect to their relationship with the local authorities) could be satisfied. Therefore there will be three courses in 2013, with an upper limit of 20 delegates per course. Please note, places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, so if you are due a five-year refresher please plan ahead.

In these changing times, the equine industry has looked to the veterinary profession for guidance and even reassurance. In England, the government has set up the Animal Health and Welfare Board as the conduit for policy and change, and the equine industry has relied heavily on veterinary input into the “sector council”. Whilst non-statute arrangements fall by the wayside, such as the National Equine Database and plans to inspect livery yards, the Riding Establishments Act remains as a beacon for veterinary guardianship of animal welfare. However, we must rise to this responsibility. The Acts are poorly written and quite antiquated. When attending riding establishments, we must be aware of, and pragmatically apply, the equine welfare Codes of Practice for the country which we are in (England, Scotland and Wales) whilst allowing for the diversity of the equine establishments we are attending, from ponies kept for pony parties to polo clubs. Similarly, particularly if the Council Environmental Health Officer is absent, we cannot make recommendations on fire extinguishers without knowledge of the Fire Safety Order 2005. Some rudimentary knowledge of health and safety is also helpful if informing a local authority about a premises and recommending the issue of a licence.

Standardisation of the inspection process, and attendance of the course, is the key to this. Members of the Riding Establishment Committee and BEVA meet regularly with proprietors and their representatives – the BHS and the ABRS – and emphasise the importance of standardisation whilst pointing out the necessity for flexibility in certain areas. The committee resists the calls for standardisation of fees from these organisations, but we urge transparency of charging. An efficient, procedural inspection process should allow for this.

**Ben Mayes, Immediate Past President, BEVA
Riding Establishments Committee**

Need a refresher? Need to advise the local authority about the inspection process?

Copies of the Riding Establishment inspector training DVD are available from Di Evans, on request. The short "seven-minute" version, ideal for proprietors and local inspectors, is available on YouTube, at the following link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArMqszrkbTs>.

INSPECTION OF RIDING ESTABLISHMENTS

The inspection of a Riding Establishment (RE) is the prime role of an Inspector - while we may be asked for advice by Council Officers, it is the licensing of premises that is at the core of what we do under the terms of the Acts which serve as our guidance (1964 & 1970).

It is important to remember that our Inspection Forms will be available to interested parties under Freedom of Information enquiries and could be used by the RCVS in cases of any negligent behaviour by an Inspector. Indeed, it is well to remember at all times that, like all other documents we sign as veterinary surgeons, they (and the task they record) should be viewed seriously and not as a less important professional task than any other.

The actual Inspection should typically follow a set routine in order to allow a logical progression through all the requirements, using the form as a guide and aide memoire. It is extremely important that as an Inspectorate we administer as standard an Inspection as possible and that it also has a high repeatability.

The process should start when the first contact is made by the Council responsible for issuing any licence and a mutually suitable appointment should be made - it should be viewed as highly desirable to have an interested Environmental Health Officer (EHO) in attendance. The Council are, after all, the client on the day and the party to whom any invoice must be sent under current RCVS guidelines - that they understand what that invoice represents is surely the ideal.

The Inspection - A Rough Guide

Arrive promptly - the RE is a business and will have other demands on its time

On arrival check for correct signage of the facility and the display of the previous licence

Complete the initial details of the Inspection form: this is a good time to obtain a general impression of the premises and the staff from the ensuing conversation

Determine the number of horses to be inspected and whether any are currently unwell, lame or on medication

Review passports - does every horse have one, is it correctly completed with reference to medicine use (if not then the welfare of the horse would be at risk). Whilst the Inspection may not directly request information regarding passports, we are logically well placed to advise the RE on their responsibilities and this can be done in a co-operative rather than disciplinary manner.

Inspect the horses: this is the most important part of the visit and one of the reasons that REs are inspected by veterinary surgeons. As a rough guide one might allow for five minutes per horse in order to perform the complete inspection as currently recommended - it is possible to reduce this where large numbers are present and the Inspector feels it is not realistic to inspect for four to five hours. Once an impression of the standard of care has been gained an experienced Inspector might choose to concentrate on certain aspects of the inspection e.g. if the foot care of the first 10 horses is satisfactory, one might subsequently choose not to lift every foot of every horse.

The inspection should include -

- an assessment of the horse's temperament and general suitability
- some means of recording body condition: condition scoring allows this to be more objective and repeatable
- assessment of foot care and/or shoeing
- cardiac auscultation

- ocular inspection with an ophthalmoscope
- assessment of gait and the presence of any lameness (trotting up back and forth should be adequate)
- consider taking digital photographs (allows a record of the horse's appearance and condition should there be any need to back up the written record)
- recording of any identifying chip is useful and potentially will become more standard
- ageing by dentition might be necessary (e.g. to ensure a horse is at least four years old) but is not essential if there are adequate records

Any horse that is unsuitable for use should be withdrawn immediately until such time as another veterinary surgeon considers it fit for use. If there is any doubt in your mind as to the significance of a finding then the horse can be withdrawn - the Inspection is not a vetting and the inspection is limited. It is reasonable to leave a difficult diagnostic decision to the veterinary surgeon responsible for the care of the horses and who will be able to perform a more complete examination. Consider carrying suitable forms for the withdrawal of any horse to make it clear that the judgment has immediate implications for the use of the horse.

If there is a finding which affects a horse's suitability for certain types of lesson but not for others (e.g. a one-eyed horse might not be considered fit for jumping lessons, but could be used as a lead pony) , then this should be clearly stated on the Inspection Form.

Tack - this should be inspected both on and off the horse. It is impossible to gauge the fit of a saddle and defend this decision without observing the saddle in place. The sitting of a saddle is not essential but could be requested if there was a suspicion that this might be potentially useful in proving the presence of any issues.

- Check the fit - space over withers, level of stuffing etc.
- Check for evidence of previous tack issues e.g. saddle sores, girth galls etc.
- Consider the presence of numnahs or excessive padding from a potentially critical viewpoint
- Assess the fit of the bridle and the suitability of the bit
- Check the stitching on all the leather work
- Check the girth / attachments for security
- Check the stirrup bars are down
- Check there are no aluminium stirrup irons in use - they are too soft to be used safely
- Ensure the tree is intact in all directions
- Labeling of tack should be encouraged as this ensures all staff can tack the horses correctly

Any defective or ill-fitting tack should be withdrawn or replaced - if there is a disagreement then ask for a saddler's report to determine the safety of the equipment.

Having completed an assessment of horses and tack, it would now be opportune to commence the visual inspection of the premises and it should be remembered that, where considered necessary, the entire premises can be considered under the Acts.

The visual inspection can be accompanied by further questioning of the manager in order to complete the rest of the Inspection Form. This is the time to look at how well the facility is managed:

- is the facility tidy
- is there adequate and suitable storage for tack, feed, bedding etc.
- are there first aid boxes for horses and riders (this might include a portable pack where trekking occurs)
- are any medicines on site correctly stored and labeled (and legal)
- is there a worming programme or WEC protocol in place
- are there any schools / paddocks for teaching and are they fit for purpose
- is the fencing in good repair

- inspection of fields / grazing / shelter / water provisions
- are ground surfaces in good repair e.g. severely broken concrete, unsafe trip hazards
- is there a vermin problem
- are the extinguishers in date and properly labeled / sited sensibly
- note fire hazards / whether to recommend a fire risk assessment
- is there a feed plan for each horse
- are the stables suitable: bulk head lights (all functional) / adequate drainage / suitable beds / properly fitting bolts / no obvious dangers
- are the staff the correct age for their roles and suitably qualified
- is the manager a suitable person and are they also suitably qualified
- the condition of riding hats and back protectors is not the Inspector's responsibility and a simple question to ascertain that the RE has a variety that meet BSI requirements will suffice

The final step in an Inspection should be to ensure the EHO has sighted the insurance documentation and accident book – while not part of our remit, it may well be the first time an EHO has visited an RE and they may benefit from the tactful advice of a more experienced Inspector.

There are occasions on which an Inspector will observe something which, while not covered under the Acts, is inherently unsafe or unsound. At these times, the Inspector should use their experience to try and ensure that the issue is resolved satisfactorily. It may be that the Inspector is the only external party to visit the premises and as such should not ignore a potential hazard to any customer or horse.

All the findings should be detailed on the Inspection Form and passed on to the Council for action with the recommendation for which, if any, licence should be given. The form should not be altered as to the basic format, as the repeatability of the Inspection process is central to the role we play under the Acts, but it can be added to in order to allow an Inspector to annotate any findings as necessary e.g. what type of water supply is present, what form of worm programme is used.

It is uncommon to find the perfect RE, but a schedule of improvements should satisfy an Inspector that any defects will be dealt with over an acceptable period of time.

If the premise is a long way from meeting the requirements then the issuing of no licence at all might well be the appropriate advice to give the Council, whereas a RE that is only requiring very minor improvements will probably merit a full licence.

Those REs that fall between these two extremes will be those for whom a Temporary Licence (TL) for a three-month period is the most suitable, with a repeat Inspection after this time to determine progress. Only two TLs can be issued before either a full licence or a withdrawal of a licence must be chosen as the next step. TLs do allow an RE the chance to improve, but they also allow the Council to be seen to not act precipitately in removing a licence should they so wish and as such can be a useful tool.

One of the major complaints of REs concerning Inspection by veterinary surgeons is widely differing processes or standards from one veterinary surgeon to another. It is for this reason that we must, as an Inspectorate, operate as closely as possible to a standard format and a standard level – failing to do so leaves us open as individuals and as a group to criticism. The Acts might not be as precise as we may wish, but our interpretation of them as an Inspectorate should be as uniform as possible.

David Reed BVM&S MRCVS
Riding Establishments Committee

UP-DATING OF INSPECTION REPORT FORMS

The time has come, we feel, to update the current Inspection Report Forms, so that they incorporate some of the aspects of the 'new' Animal Welfare Acts, as well as perhaps provide additional guidance for upholding the original Riding Establishment Acts. Sadly we are aware that a neatly-ticked inspection form may not always reflect an acceptable level of inspection and, as always, we are looking for ways to improve the standardisation of this whole process.

We would welcome any comments from those of you also in the 'front line' as to how we can achieve this – it is unlikely that anything new will come into use until next year, leaving us plenty of time to consult and select.

Do remember that these forms can be completed and submitted electronically, providing the LA is happy to accept them in this format. Some of you may find yourselves having to use a particular Council's own forms, which is perfectly acceptable providing it makes reference to all the areas that the Acts cover, and which are detailed in our guidelines. Finding oneself being expected to do a glorified Health & Safety assessment, with no mention of tack or statutory notices for example, is not acceptable and should be resisted.

Rebecca Hamilton-Fletcher BVSc MRCVS
Riding Establishments Committee

WHO CAN RUN A RIDING ESTABLISHMENT?

Local authorities will usually seek the advice of veterinary inspectors when making decisions as to who may be licensed to run a Riding Establishment (RE) and this therefore forms part of the standard reporting form. This article reviews the legislation and recent developments, particularly relating to vocational qualifications. This is an area that can be particularly difficult where new REs are proposed or where persons retire and the new legal owner of the RE is inexperienced and holds no formal qualification.

Licensing authorities under the RE Acts recognise a person who might keep a RE as someone who "appears to them to be suitable and qualified, either by experience in the management of horses or by being the holder of an approved certificate or by employing in the management of the riding establishment a person so qualified". This therefore creates the idea of employing a suitable "manager" where the owner is a "body corporate" or an individual not sufficiently qualified; if you go down this route remember it is not enough to just import a qualified instructor for lessons, the manager should be responsible for the day to day running of the RE.

The RE Acts specify the licensee (or manager) must be at least 18 years old and not a disqualified person under the RE Acts, the Pet Animals Act 1951, the Protection of Animals Acts or the Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963. You will note there are a number of other pieces of more recent legislation not mentioned, most notably the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006, under which individuals may be banned from keeping animals, and I would suggest this would also disqualify an individual from holding an RE licence under the discretionary powers vested in a local authority under the RE Acts, even where he or she employed a more suitably qualified manager.

Regarding "qualifications", in 1964 the BHS Assistant Instructor's Certificate (BHSAI), Instructor's Certificate (BHSI) and Fellowship (FBHS) together with "Fellowship of the Institute of the Horse" were listed as being acceptable. The Institute of the Horse disappeared with the creation of the BHS in 1947. Other alternative qualifications were to be specified by order of the Secretary of State but in practice this has never happened. These days, vocational qualifications are regulated by sector skills councils and that for the equestrian industry is LANTRA. LANTRA determines national occupational standards (NOS) for its industries and ensures that related vocational qualifications are relevant and at an appropriate standard.

So what are suitable qualifications? The RE Acts cover everything from typical riding schools to beach donkeys, hired hunters and trekking ponies ie anything involving "hire" of horses or other

equidae for riding purposes. It is generally held that the qualifications should cover a basic standard in practical horse husbandry. We are advised that the following are regarded as minimal and equivalent

- At least an NVQ Level 3 in Horse Care and Management
- At least a BTEC Level 3 National Diplomas in Horse Management offered by Edexcel
- At least a Level 3 National (Advanced National) Certificate in Management of Horses offered by City & Guilds
- At least a British Horse Society Assistant Instructor Certificate (BHSAI);
- British Equestrian Tourism Ride Leader Qualification
- British Equestrian Tourism Riding Holiday Centre Manager Qualification

These are all regarded at least as Level 3 qualifications and regarded as vocational based, ie indicating practical training. This list is not exhaustive and may be enlarged as other qualifying training courses and examinations become recognised. Other options, particularly pertaining to teaching, are advisable for those working in an instructional capacity, but these core standards are relevant to all those working in the industry.

There are many other certificates, diplomas and degrees that will be presented to us as evidence of suitability. Many equine science degrees for example are fine academically but do not necessarily indicate any practical training in horse husbandry whatsoever. Such are therefore not “qualifications” and while reasonable indicators of academic prowess should not be confused with vocational qualifications.

Other more advanced qualifications are of course acceptable, for example, the higher BHS instructor’s qualifications or the BHS Stable Managers Certificate which is at BHSAI level with the teaching part removed.

Where a person is presented without formal qualification, evidence should be sought as to suitability by seeking appropriate references and making sensible enquiries. A CV should be requested to see what responsibilities the applicant has had previously. The object of the RE Acts is to ensure adequate minimum standards of management and this must always be kept in mind; most new applications would generally require an appropriate Level 3 formal qualification as listed above, therefore those seeking to avoid formal regulated exams should be the exception.

Chris House MRCVS

Riding Establishments Committee (with acknowledgements to the BHS and LANTRA for technical advice)

REFRESHER/INDUCTION COURSES 2013

There are 56 members due to attend a refresher course in 2013 and following feedback from last year’s courses, it is felt that a smaller number of delegates per course would be more manageable. Therefore it is intended to run three courses during the summer 2013.

The first course will be at Newbury Racecourse on Wednesday 12 June 2013, the second at Uttoxeter Racecourse on Wednesday 26 June and the third on Wednesday 24 July at The Westerwood Hotel, Cumbernauld, Scotland.

If you are due to attend a refresher course this year, please make a note of these dates in your diary. Registration forms and full details will be sent out in February. Early registration is recommended and all places will be reserved on a first-come, first-served basis.

INSPECTORATE LIST 2013

Members are reminded that the 2013 Riding Establishments Inspectorate List is only available on the RCVS website at www.rcvs.org.uk. In the ‘search’ box in the top right hand corner of the home page, type in ‘riding establishments’ and you will be directed to the appropriate pages.

Although local authorities should now be aware of this change, the secretary has received a number of calls from local authorities requesting an up-to-date List. Some appear to be still using out-of-date printed lists. Members are requested to notify any authorities for whom they carry out inspections that there have been changes to the list and that Local Authorities should protect themselves by only using the qualified inspectors who are on the RCVS list.

The report forms are available for downloading from the website. These report forms have now also been uploaded as Word documents and can be completed on the computer. Members are also advised to check that Local Authorities will accept online submission of the report forms or whether they will still require a signed copy (with a covering letter).

All members are asked to check their entry on the 2013 Inspectorate List and notify the Secretary of any amendments required.
