

NEWSLETTER

THE INSPECTORATE OF RIDING ESTABLISHMENTS

Issue 11 – January 2014

RCVS Back in the Saddle....

In 2001 the administration of the Inspectorate List was outsourced to Mrs Diana Evans. This outsourcing was financed jointly by the RCVS and BVA, and for many years each house has paid half the cost of maintaining the list. In 2012, the BVA decided to cease funding the list with effect from January 2013. This means there are a number of changes afoot in relation to the future of the Riding Establishments Committee and the administration of the Inspectorate.

The most significant change is that from January this year, the administration has been taken back 'in house' at the RCVS. Diana will continue to work closely with staff at the RCVS in a supporting role for the next two years. The running and organisation of the refresher/induction courses will remain the responsibility of the Riding Establishments Committee for the 2014 courses, and any questions about the course, including those about the venue and location, course content or payments should continue to be directed to Diana at dianaevans647@btinternet.com.

From this year onwards, if you are interested in applying to join the inspectorate and you would like to know more about the application process and criteria you should contact Nicola South (n.south@rcvs.org.uk). If you are an existing inspector, member of the public or a local authority, with a general query you should contact Laura McClintock (l.mcclintock@rcvs.org.uk).

The constitution of the Sub Committee has also changed this year. RCVS President Colonel Neil Smith has replaced Bertie Ellis as Chairman of the Riding Establishments Sub Committee. Neil was commissioned into the Royal Army Veterinary Corps in 1989. His career has taken him all over the world and has included small animal and equine practice, meat inspection and managing human pharmaceutical product development. He has also been an LVI and OVS. Bertie will continue to work alongside the Committee during the transitional period and the RCVS would like to thank Bertie for his hard work and dedication to the Committee over the past years.

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons

REORGANISATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE RE COMMITTEE

As you all well know, we have spent many years between the Scylla of the RCVS and the Charybdis of the BVA regarding financing of this committee. As you are also aware, this problem has been brewing for an equal number of years in that the 1964 RE Act put the onus on maintaining a list on both the RCVS and the BVA without specifying where the money was to come from. This has been a constant source of irritation to both parties, the BVA often pleading poverty, and the RCVS, to its credit, stumping up the money, albeit with some understandable reluctance.

Various schemes have been tried, initially when I became chair in the 1990's, the RCVS did all the heavy lifting with their own staff, sometimes good, sometimes not so. This was changed to outsourcing, when Diana came in to the rescue. The costs are pretty miniscule at 10k in terms of a RCVS/BVA combined turnover well into the millions, but fashions change, as you know, so the next mantra was self-funding as the height of moral rectitude. This phase, although long lasting, finally met its match when yet another legal opinion stated that as the RE was a statutory obligation, the RCVS could not charge the inspectors. (Are you listening at the back, or have I lost you?)

The upshot is that we are back almost where we started, and the good news is that Diana is still on board.

The other good news is that the committee is firmly embedded in the RCVS psyche, rather than being a forlorn child with disputing parents, and that the current RCVS President, Neil Smith is our Chairman.

Looks really good to me, I hope it does to you because I think we do our profession proud by keeping this inspectorate going. It may not make you a lot of money, but it does put veterinary surgeons where they should be, right in the heart of equine welfare.

My best wishes to all of you, new and old,

Bertie Ellis PhD BVSc MRCVS
Vice Chairman RE Committee

THE NEED FOR STANDARDS

Our inspection process is well established and forms the central theme of both our courses, which Veterinary Inspectors must attend initially and as a refresher at least every five years and the instructional DVDs. However every year the Riding Establishments Committee (REC)/RCVS receive a number of reports and complaints of inspectors not apparently sticking to the accepted protocol.

The veterinary inspection process is central to the operation of the Riding Establishment Acts (REAs) 1964 and 1970, designed to maintain welfare standards in any business offering horses, ponies and donkeys for hire for riding purposes. The inspection process comprises those parts obligatory under the REAs and those that have become accepted by custom as essential. Examples of obligatory matters would include the statutory signs that must be displayed and not working animals under four years of age; these matters are spelt out in the REAs. However large parts of the REAs only offer general guidance to the inspector and it is here that the protocol for inspection has been developed over the years by the REC. A good analogy for the latter would be the protocol adopted for pre-purchase examinations, again not set down by statute but developed to ensure proper standards accepted as reasonable and customary by the industry.

The most important part of the process is the inspection of the working animals on the premises. All should be inspected and this inspection although brief, should include a visual inspection, assessment of farriery and footcare, trot up in hand, auscultation of the heart and inspection of eyes in a darkened box with an ophthalmoscope. This process is designed to ensure that the general standard is adequate and to flag up specific issues with individual animals. Certain findings, for example lameness, may mean that horse is immediately removed from work but in many cases it will simply mean that the owners attention is drawn to a specific problem such as progressively reduced vision. A subsequent detailed clinical examination may then be required by the Establishment's own veterinary surgeon, with an appropriate report forwarded to the local authority. The Veterinary Inspector's role is to advise the local authority and ensure they are acting reasonably. The Veterinary Inspector should be independent of the establishment concerned as there is an evident potential conflict of interest if they are also advising the local authority, perhaps that the establishment should be denied a licence.

The facilities, equipment and operational methods of the establishment will be also assessed; again much of this is by custom and standards determined by the REC, some of which will change over the years. One of the reasons that Veterinary Inspectors need to be in equine practice is that they will in their day to day working experience be aware of new methods and trends in the industry and be able to advise the local authority how to proceed.

Complaints fall into several categories however putting aside the perennial problem of variation in fees between local authorities, they are usually either because of inadequate or over zealous inspections. If you decide to depart from the accepted norm of the inspection process it would be wise to record that fact and why in your report to the authority. The authority will have varying standards of knowledge of the inspection process and indeed may attempt to influence how you carry out your inspections. That is why we have standards; if a local authority is departing

themselves significantly from the accepted normal standard talk to the REC/RCVS as we are there to support the veterinary inspectorate.

We as a profession are uniquely qualified to advise objectively under the REAs. The REAs are about minimum accepted standards with a proactive inspection process, not reactive as is the case with much other welfare legislation. The industry in 1964 put their trust in us as knowledgeable and fair arbiters of both welfare and safety. Much has changed in the intervening years but a recent survey by the BHS suggested very broad support for the veterinary inspection process. That is why we have standards; let's stick to them!

Chris House BVetMed MRCVS

BVA representative on the RECommittee

TACK FITTING AND POSSIBLE INSURANCE IMPLICATIONS

We are all aware of the importance of correct fitting tack when it comes to the welfare of horses; in particular the relationship between poorly fitting saddles and a variety of back issues. Such saddles can also lead to additional stresses on other parts of the body as horses start moving in a different frame to compensate for these pressure points.

In addition to physical damage and pain, saddle pain can, of course, cause behavioural problems, causing the most well behaved ponies to become unpredictable in their work. This in turn can put the novice rider at a far greater risk of having an accident, which could lead to the proprietor being at risk of a claim being made against them.

Liability claims often take a long time to resolve due to investigations necessary and the negotiations between insurer and claimant (or their solicitor). The first step in any claim is to investigate the matter in full, which then allows the insurer to form an opinion of liability. A loss adjuster may sometimes be appointed to carry out investigations on behalf of the insurer for serious claims. While the insurer will handle the claim on the client's behalf it can still be a worrying time.

The simplest of oversights could lead to a claim, such as the girth not being tightened correctly, causing the saddle to slip and a rider to lose balance and fall. Having horses presented tacked up at inspections not only provides the opportunity to assess the suitability of tack, its fit and general state of repair, but also presents the opportunity to assess the attention given to tacking up a horses. If you find that one in every three horses presented had a loose girth, a simple word to the proprietor highlighting the potential for an accident to happen could help play a significant role in reducing the chance of a claim for the business.

At KBIS we have always worked with vets to try and reach the best possible outcome for all concerned. We are pleased to have long standing associations with a number of highly regarded veterinarians and with BEVA. If there is one thing we have learnt during this time it's that owners trust and listen to their vets and are willing to take their advice. Therefore a few simple suggestions by you, when required, really could help to minimise the risk of potential accidents and the proprietor finding themselves amidst a liability claim.

Dan Parry, KBIS

REFRESHER/INDUCTION COURSES 2014

The first course will be at The Horse Trust, Speen, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire on Wednesday 25 June 2014.

The second course will be held at the SRUC Oatridge Campus, Ecclesmachan, Broxburn, West Lothian on Wednesday 9th July.

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. If you have any queries please contact Diana dianaevans647@btinternet.com or 01380 871289.

Copies of the training DVD are available from the RCVS. There is also available a 7minute "public information" video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArMqsZrkbTs>) for riding establishments and local authorities which provides important information on the inspection process and the link below

HORSE PASSPORTS

There have been questions raised recently with the Committee, by both Inspectors and owners of Riding Establishments concerning the inspection of Horse Passports.

While the Acts under which we operate do not mention passports (indeed they did not exist when the Acts passed into Statute) the Committee takes the view that the lack of a Passport has a direct implication for a horse's welfare. As Veterinary Surgeons, we are required to ask sight of a Passport prior to administration of a medicine and to ensure its correct completion – either by the owner or by ourselves if necessary post administration. It is the lack of a correctly completed Passport which has obvious implications at this point in any treatment regime and hence the welfare of the horse or donkey.

In light of the above, we would recommend that Inspectors ask for sight of Passports and examine a small number at random to ensure compliance with Part II of Section IX. This should be adequate to remind the Establishment proprietor of their obligations and to allow for any necessary corrective procedures to be put in place. It is perfectly fitting for Inspectors to offer this *advice*, and for any inadequacies to be passed to the EHO. In doing so, we are fulfilling our over-riding obligation to horse welfare during the Inspection process.

The enforcement of the Passport Legislation is not however our concern – that is a matter for Authorised Council Officers, usually the Trading Standards Department. Authorised officers of the minister or the local authority have the power to enter premises (and vehicles) and inspect horse passports and other documents at any reasonable time. Failure to produce a horse passport upon demand, or the movement of a horse without its passport in the circumstances listed above, is an offence, liable upon summary conviction to a fine. Such a separate inspection is a matter between the relevant Council and the Riding Establishment and is not intended to be part of an Annual Riding Establishment Inspection.

As with all aspects of an Inspection, we would ask that all Inspectors carry out the role in a repeatable manner both individually and as a body – as such, we would recommend an advisory oversight of Equine Passports.

David Reed BVM&S MRCVS
RE Committee

INDUSTRY LIAISON – A WORLD OF ACRONYMS!

It is great news that the RCVS have embraced the Riding Establishments' Committee and that the current president, Neil Smith MRCVS, now chairs our meetings. The committee members have been concerned for some time that the lack of engagement by the "ownership" organisations, the BVA and RCVS, may lead to problems. The RCVS is our veterinary governing body, so control of the riding establishment inspectorate sits best in their fold. The RE Committee deals with queries from inspectors, the Association of British Riding Schools (ABRS) and the BHS on behalf of proprietors and local authorities (LAs). The RCVS team at Horseferry Road now back up the committee and Diana Evans with legal advice and a degree of gravitas – perhaps wayward LAs may now comply! The old chestnut of who pays who and the LA being the client spring to mind.

Just before Christmas, on behalf of the RE committee, I attended the biannual Equine Health and Welfare Strategy Group (EHWSG) meeting hosted by DEFRA at Nobel House in London. Some 30 equine industry organisations attend this meeting. Some of you may be aware that under the current government, DEFRA formed the quango the Animal Health and Welfare Board of England (AHWBE) chaired by Michael Seals (ex BHS Trustee and founder of the fallen stock scheme) with monthly meetings “observed” by Welsh, Northern Irish and Scottish representatives. The Board of 15 includes DEFRA staff including the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVOs) and his deputy. The Board asked each “sector” of the animal industry to form itself into a sector council. So there is now a sector council for cattle, for sheep, for goats, companion animals, camelids, fish and so on. The £7 billion equine industry (agriculture is £9 billion), is well represented by the EHWSG and its managing committee – which has a permanent BEVA representative, currently David Mountford MRCVS, the BEVA chief executive. An enforcing organisation also has a permanent position on the EHWSG managing committee. Currently this is the Local Authority national equine representative, Carolyn Madgewick of Hampshire County Council.

Roly Owers MRCVS, chief executive of World Horse Welfare and BEVA Treasurer also sits on the EHWSG managing committee. The AHWBE has encouraged Sectors to become more autonomous and to become responsible for their own industry. This is as DEFRA makes continued cuts and therefore cannot manage disease and disease control as it did. Under the current government “red tape challenge”, for example, there are threats to the notifiable status of CEM and EVA. Within the equine sector, Roly has formed the Disease Coalition – with representatives from DEFRA, AHVLA, BEVA, the RSPCA, the AHT and university epidemiologists. I sit there as a lowly practitioner. The Disease Coalition, launched an industry wide bio security code, the Equine Health Checklist, at the National Equine Forum in March 2013. This 5 point A3 size poster has been distributed by World Horse Welfare as a quality paper centre spread in a September edition of the Horse and Hound, by the BHS to their 70,000 members and by the ABRs to their 300 riding schools. All had accompanying bio security articles. The Checklist was launched to the profession, through BEVA and the Vet Record, but, due to information overload, we are poor on the uptake. The equine industry and DEFRA hope that this poster is displayed in every livery yard and riding school in the land.....how many have you seen? Just google it or try the BEVA link <http://www.beva.org.uk/uploads/documents/equine-health-checklist-final-march13.pdf> I presented on this at the ABRs annual conference in October and if you wish to borrow the presentation for practice evenings, let me know! The Disease Coalition are now working on a poster on yard management, to include the basic components of riding establishment inspection – horse welfare, health and safety, insurance, duty of care and so on. Phew....I appreciate its complicated, welcome to the equine and veterinary political world! It is important that the RE inspectorate, some 150 of us, are represented. We are often criticised for lack of standardisation, for over-zealous inspection, perceived as over-charging, for not following the recommended inspection technique and so on, so it is important that we are present and can respond. Industry liaison is an important part of what the RE Committee do.

Ben Mayes MA VetMB MRCVS
RE Committee

A CHECKLIST FOR EQUINE HEALTH

A single poster, broken down into 5 interacting columns, summarising all that is needed to keep your horse healthy. Wouldn't it be great if that poster could be displayed in every yard in the land, and constantly remind and guide us on how to keep our horses, whether in a livery yard, training yard, competition stables, dealers or a sanctuary.

Well, here's a copy to pin up, discuss and use to help devise your yard health policy.

Or download it at <http://www.beva.org.uk/uploads/documents/equine-health-checklist-final-march13.pdf> or just put CHECKLIST FOR EQUINE HEALTH in your search engine. It was launched last month at the National Equine Forum in the presence of the Princess Royal and the Secretary of State for Rural Affairs, Owen Paterson.

The Checklist has been put together by the Disease Coalition, a group of leading vets from across the industry, including from government (defra and Scotland), the state veterinary service (AHVLA), a professor of veterinary epidemiology, an infectious disease specialist from the Animal Health Trust, practitioners and equine charities including World Horse Welfare and the RSPCA. The Disease Coalition is the lead coordinating group for equine disease, reporting to the Equine Health and Welfare Strategy Group, which is the sector council for the equine industry. The BHS is a leading participant.

It is about **BIOSECURITY**. This has become quite a buzz word, especially in the light of recent disease “outbreaks” including the recent neurological Equine Herpes Virus (EHV), or last year the exotic notifiable diseases Swamp Fever or Equine Infectious Anaemia (EIA) and Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM). Exotic means the disease isn’t usually found in the UK and notifiable means that the state veterinary service (AHVLA) must, by law, be informed by the vet suspecting the disease. Then there’s ongoing endemic (meaning frequently circulating in the UK) disease such as Equine Influenza and Strangles. ***Biosecurity means the steps we take to prevent the spread of disease.*** This is not just infectious disease, caused by bacteria or viruses, but any condition that causes an animal to be ill. This can be a wound caused by a kick or poor fencing – which can be prevented by better group turnout and better fencing. These can therefore be thought of as biosecurity measures!

The Checklist has been prepared on the basis that most yards in the UK do not have any biosecurity policy. However, it is likely that there is some biosecurity, with worming, vaccination, turnout and maintenance programmes, but is this done in a yard coordinated manner? The Checklist has particularly important guidance for yard managers, and gives the opportunity for DIY yards, for example, to develop a coordinated approach.

However, the Checklist is just that, and the actual biosecurity policy for a yard must be drawn up and written down with input from the yard vet, e.g. a newly arrived policy, worming programme (including poo picking), vaccination, feeding, turnout, teeth care and isolation, each tailored to the facilities and capabilities available, and, most importantly made to be realistic.

Let’s look at the five interacting columns:

- (1) **ARRIVALS**. It is so important to have a policy here and to have biosecurity steps planned and the new owner informed. It is also important to be realistic, with the policy tailored to the degree of risk and the facilities available. Of course, isolation is important, but in most cases two weeks is enough and it may just mean using the end stable in the smallest/remotest block with attention to avoiding staff and equipment spreading disease. ***Knowing where the horse has come from*** can really help as to how far to go. For example, a written declaration of health (e.g. in the last 14 days) from the previous yard’s manager, and declaration of worming and vaccination history may be enough. On the other hand, blood testing for strangles, exotic disease in imported animals and stricter isolation may be more suitable in higher risk animals or more closed yards.
- (2) **GENERAL**. This column includes many general health aspects and includes how often horses must be checked, whether stables or at grass. It refers back to column one where a health assessment is briefly described. Feeding and nutrition, muck control, clipping and the use of rugs as well as a paragraph on breeding is included. There is reference to other resources, most importantly the excellent nutritionist service offered by feed manufacturers and the HBLB Code of Practice which describes which swabs and tests should be taken pre-breeding and also pre-movement of horses. Obviously all aspects of general health cannot be covered and it reminds us that the Checklist is purely a guide.
- (3) **HEALTH**. The central column includes many veterinary aspects of health care and preventative medicine. It is a legal requirement under the Animal Welfare (and Health) Act to

be registered with a vet, but it is important that the yard has a vet for advice on biosecurity issues and policy. This is often the vet practice that visits the yard most frequently or the yard manager's own vet. The vet should liaise with other practices that visit the yard. Good communication between the yard management, liveries, the vets, farriers, equine dental technicians, physios is vital to a well-run, healthy, bio-secure yard. The **Consult** paragraph briefly describes when to call a vet.

Disease prevention is so important and there is increasing concern about the over-use of wormers causing worms to become resistant. The use of worm egg counts, poo picking and accepting a low worm burden is key to avoiding wormer resistance developing locally. Flies are very effective vectors of disease including infecting wounds, causing eye infections, and even the spread of sarcoids. Midges are vectors for Swamp Fever and West Nile Virus, mosquitoes for African Horse Sickness; midge saliva allergy, Sweet Itch, is an easily manageable condition but requires effort from the owner/carer and cannot be ignored or accepted. There is a paragraph devoted to vaccination, and it is important that the yard manager and owners are clear what vaccinations apply to the yard and why. It is important to understand that many vaccinations, including 'flu and EHV, are about population disease control as much as individual protection, the general rule of thumb being that 70% of the yard "population" need to be vaccinated up-to-date to prevent an outbreak. Veterinary advice may be required here to help coordinate policy.

There's no bones about it, veterinary care and general health care costs **money and budgeting is an essential part** of being a horse owner and increasingly so in the current economic situation. Some vet practices offer health care schemes, vets' fees insurance helps planning for unexpected illness and injury, but the policies have limitations and are not designed to support exhaustive investigations of poor performance. Column 4 refers to euthanasia. Most of our horses have had medicines at some point in their lives and unless these are individually recorded in the passport and do not include drugs such as bute. If this is the case the animal cannot be sent to an abattoir for humane slaughter for human consumption and euthanasia and disposal costs can be several hundred pounds. If need be, this should be budgeted for. Owning an animal is a privilege which includes the responsibility of preventing suffering in this way and reluctance to do this for emotional or financial reasons is unacceptable. If a horse owner is in a financial pickle charities may be able to help, but they do not pay for vets' fees for horses!

- (4) **DISEASE.** Column four tends to deal with the ***once a disease has been suspected or detected*** situation. This includes assessing the risk within a yard, and what to do if a disease is suspected. There is a significant section on **ISOLATION**. Planning on how this can be best achieved and when to isolate an animal or group of animals is one of the weakest aspects of biosecurity in many yards currently. Having an empty box 100 yards away from the others is rarely practical, but do you know how to divide your yard, create disease barriers and use protective clothing and disinfectant, which paddock to use for isolated groups? Planning for this is where the yard vets' advice should be sought. Two weeks is often long enough period of isolation for suspected cases, but if a disease is detected it may be longer.
- (5) **TRANSPORT.** This is another situation where disease, injury and stress (both owner and horse!) can be prevented with simple planning. Injuries in a horsebox whilst travelling are all

too common. Not being able to travel an animal to a vet clinic in an emergency, e.g. severe wound or colic, may mean the disease cannot be treated properly and euthanasia may be necessary. From a veterinary perspective this is perfectly acceptable, but if, as an owner, you wish for your animal to have complete veterinary care then being able to travel is essential. Horsebox maintenance is essential, and not just the engine! Along with the fire services, I attend horses with legs through horsebox floors far too frequently. Comfort during travelling for the animal includes training the animal to load and keeping it up, as well as haynets and water stops.

There are also laws about horse transport, from, licensing, driver and horsebox requirements to equine passports. Please be aware of these. Except for youngstock and feral animals, horses should be travelled partitioned from others. Biosecurity in the shared airspace is important and box disinfection should be routine. Recording of journeys to and from a yard, even in the simple diary, may help vets in a disease outbreak even years later and help contain a population threatening situation. This is normal practice and a legal requirement in movements of other animals, but is rarely done in horses. It is our responsibility to do this voluntarily, before it is enforced.

Being a horse owner, yard manager, groom or rider brings with it important responsibilities to the health and welfare of our horses, ponies and donkeys. This Checklist, displaying it in a feedroom or tackroom, will hopefully promote thought, discussion, coordination and action to prevent the spread of disease.

Stay healthy!

Ben Mayes MRCVS

Equine Practitioner and Past president of the British Equine Veterinary Association, member of the Equine Sector Council's Disease Coalition



DISEASE CAN RUIN A RIDING SCHOOL – BIO SECURITY IS IMPORTANT

THIS HORSE HAS EXTENSIVE BURNS FROM A YARD FIRE. EVERY YARD MUST HAVE A FIRE PLAN.

