

HORSE RIDING ESTABLISHMENTS

(See also: [Agricultural/Horticultural Amenity Equipment\(6\)](#); [Biological Agents\(10\)](#); [Communication/Consultation on health and safety\(16\)](#); [COSHH\(19\)](#); [Electricity\(24\)](#); [Information, Instruction and Training\(41\)](#); [Machinery Safety\(49\)](#); [Manual Handling\(52\)](#); [Respiratory Sensitisers\(67\)](#); [Personal Protective Equipment\(63\)](#); [First Aid\(28\)](#); [Fire\(26\)](#))

INTRODUCTION

Approximately three and a half million people ride horses in the UK on a regular basis. Unfortunately there are around eight reported accidents each day involving horses on the highway and there are undoubtedly other incidents both on and off the road. The majority of accidents at riding establishments are associated with horses themselves, either from riding or handling. Occupational health issues also arise from substances such as dusts and pesticides, and zoonoses.

The following is a summary of advice on the legal responsibilities and good practice in horse riding establishments. This is taken from booklet HS(G)105 - Health and safety in horse riding establishments (HSE). This publication is currently out of print, but may be viewed by prior arrangement at Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Environmental Health Services, Council House, Coton Road, Nuneaton, CV11 5AA.

LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Employers have duties to:

- (i) employees - to ensure their health, safety and welfare
 - to consult on issues of health and safety
 - to keep certain health and safety records and documentation.
- (ii) non-employees, e.g. the public/clients, self-employed people, contractors' employees, vets, etc.

Employees' duties include taking reasonable care for themselves and others and co-operating with the employer.

Key issues in securing a safe and healthy place of work are:

- (i) **management** of health and safety (risk assessment, record keeping, organising for safety and monitoring/auditing)
- (ii) **training** e.g. NVQ; induction and refresher training; qualifications for instructors; training to ensure competency in key areas e.g. manual handling, risk assessments, COSHH assessments, general safety awareness. As part of the licence conditions some councils (including Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council) require at least one member of staff to possess a Riding

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and Road Safety Certificate. Further details are available from The Safety Office, The British Horse Society, Stoneleigh Deer Park, Kenilworth, Warks CV8 2LR. Tel: (01926) 707700.

HAZARDS & PRECAUTIONS

1. Manual Handling

Manual handling accidents account for almost one third of injuries reported to enforcing authorities. Detailed guidance can be found in the Manual Handling Element of this manual but in outline the approach should be:

- (i) **avoid** manual handling activities where there is a risk of injury, so far as is reasonably practicable;
- (ii) **assess and reduce** the risk of injury from the remaining manual handling activities taking into account the following:
 - the task: e.g. moving bales of hay; watering horses - can work be re-organised to reduce manual handling?
 - the load: e.g. difficulty of handling animals; could handling aids, bridles, etc. be used?
 - the working environment: are storage systems and practices optimised? Are floors even and in good condition?
 - individual capability: e.g. age, fitness, maturity, etc. of staff;
- (iii) Provide **training** to develop good handling techniques;
- (iv) Ensure **safe working practices**, e.g. in the stacking of bales.

2. Hazardous Substances / Micro-organisms

COSHH assessments may be needed for disinfectants, detergents, insecticides, veterinary products, harmful micro-organisms and dusts. Detailed guidance can be found in the COSHH element of this manual.

Dusts: known respiratory sensitisers found in riding establishments are dusts found in horses' coats and moulds and fungal spores from hay, straw and animal feeds. COSHH assessments may include reference to ventilation, working practices and suitable respiratory protective equipment (e.g. dust respirator).

Zoonoses (diseases transmissible from animals to humans): Steps should be taken to protect employees against the possibility of ringworm or leptospirosis (Weils Disease). These may include protective clothing, good standards of personal hygiene, pest control (for Weils Disease) and the provision of information/instruction to staff.

Tetanus (possibly in dropping and manure heaps) - all staff in contact with horses should be vaccinated; good personal hygiene is also essential.

Pesticides - Staff using pesticides must be competent and have received adequate information and training. If 'agricultural' pesticides are used, a Certificate of Competence may be required. Safety considerations include safe and proper use, safe location and storage and appropriate signage.

3. Horses

Horses are large, heavy and unpredictable animals, but risks can be reduced by taking the following steps:

- Providing adequate training for staff.
- Ensuring competency of handling through training, qualifications and experience.
- Observing recognised methods of horse restraint.
- Providing suitable personal protective equipment (safety footwear, protective headgear, etc.).
- Good standards of general horse handling (loading/unloading; handling in restricted areas, etc.).
- Extra care being taken with children and novices, and observing safe systems of work with all groups.

4. Environment and Welfare

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 cover all workplaces. Relevant requirements (amongst others) will include: adequate ventilation, lighting and construction standards for stabling; safe access to hay lofts; safe visitors' areas; adequate staff facilities (toilets and washing facilities), etc. **NB** Good standards of housekeeping are important in reducing trips and falls.

5. Tack

HS(G)105 provides guidance on safety aspects of saddles, stirrup leathers and irons, bridles, bits and personal protective equipment (PPE) including protective headgear (which should always be worn). It also covers aspects of road safety.

6. Electricity

Electrical hazards may arise in particular due to dampness, dust, physical damage, misuse and incorrect design or installation. Advice on electrical safety is contained in the Electricity and Electrical Equipment elements of this manual. It is recommended that the fixed system is inspected every 5 years and that all electrical appliances are examined/checked at a frequency appropriate to the risk.

7. Machinery

- All machinery and its safeguards should be kept in good condition and be serviced/maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Particular hazards are associated with the use of tractors and, in particular, power take-off (PTO) driven machines. Training of tractor drivers and guarding of PTO and PTO shaft and other dangerous parts of machines is essential.
- Steam/water pressure cleaners pose a risk of electrocution/ burns and require specific precautions (including the use of a residual current device (RCD) or equivalent).

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CHECKLIST - **HORSE RIDING ESTABLISHMENTS**

1. Have you carried out all relevant safety assessments i.e.
COSHH YES NO
Manual Handling Operations YES NO
Risk assessments YES NO
2. Have you consequently established safe working practices and procedures? YES NO
3. Do you inform instruct and train your employees and is this documented/recorded? YES NO
4. Do you undertake regular audits/checks for safety covering matters such as housekeeping, electrical safety, condition of premises in general, tack, protective clothing, machinery, first aid facilities, etc? YES NO

REFERENCES/FURTHER DETAILS

- *1. Booklet HS(G) 105 - Health and Safety in Horse Riding Establishment HSE ISBN 0-7176-0632-5
- *2. Booklet 'The Audi guide to Road Safety and Horse Riding' available from The British Horse Society, Stoneleigh Deer Park, Kenilworth, Warks CV8 2LR. Tel: (01926) 707700.
- *3. A range of leaflets are available from The Society of Master Saddlers, 4 Chapel Place, Mary St., Bovey Tracey, Devon TQ13 9JA
including
 - Safety Stirrup Irons
 - Safety in the Saddle
 - The Simple Rules of Saddle Fitting
- *4. Leaflet 'Stable Fires', published by The British Horse Society.
- *5. Booklet C30 (8/99)(HSE) 'Adventure Activities Centres: five steps to risk assessment'. £4.50
ISBN 0-7176-2463-3

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- * Available to view by prior arrangement at Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Environmental Health Services, Council House, Coton Road, Nuneaton. CV11 5AA
- ** Free copy available from Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council at the above address.

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