

NATIONAL EQUINE FORUM

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
16th NATIONAL EQUINE
FORUM**

held on

Thursday 27th March 2008

at

**The Royal Society
Carlton House Terrace**

NOTICES

The National Equine Forum is run in conjunction with the British Equestrian Federation.

If you wish to make comments or suggest topics for future Forums please contact:-

**Tracy Lepkowska
Honorary Secretary
National Equine Forum
Warwickshire College
Moreton Morrell
Warwickshire. CV35 9BL**

Tel: +44 (0)1926 318308

Fax: +44 (0)1926 318300

e-mail: equineforum@btinternet.com

website: www.bef.co.uk/useful_information/National_Equine_Forum.html

The 2009 National Equine Forum will be held at the Royal Society, Carlton House Terrace on Tuesday 31st March

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GOVERNMENT VIEW OF THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE EQUINE INDUSTRY

JONATHAN SHAW MP

Minister for the Horse Industry

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Thank you for that kind introduction. I am very pleased to be here and to be given the opportunity to speak to you today. I'm very much aware that I'm talking to you today as a relatively new Minister for the Horse Industry following my colleagues Jim Knight and Barry Gardiner.

Unlike my two predecessors, I am not here today to launch or announce anything new. I had hoped to be able to report to you that real progress had been made in amending the 1971 Animals Act. As you will all know, the wording of section 2 of the Act is not as clear as it could be and, following the House of Lords' Mirvahedy judgment in 2003, there is considerable uncertainty as to when strict liability should apply to the owners of animals that cause harm or damage. Many people rightly believe that this uncertainty has been reflected in increased insurance premiums for animal owners and businesses, such as riding schools, and that a clarification of the law would lead to a reduction in these premiums.



Now, whether or not the Mirvahedy judgment led directly to increased insurance premiums - and we do know that they have gone up over the past few years - and whether or not amending the law would automatically result in reduced insurance costs, the Government has made no secret of its sympathy with the objective of amending the Act. As my colleague said a couple of years ago, and our position did not change. Legal certainty is in everyone's interest, and if that certainty helped to reduce the insurance costs facing individuals and businesses then that would be an additional bonus. That was why the Government supported Stephen Crabb's Private Member's Bill to amend the Act. It was why we gave him the services of Parliamentary Counsel to draft the amendment, and why we ensured that the draft Bill went through all the necessary clearance processes to make sure that it was acceptable and workable and something Government could support.

Unfortunately, despite winning the second reading vote 26 to 1 the other Friday, there were not enough MPs present for the Bill to proceed, which was bitterly disappointing. It is a rule of Parliament that at least 40 members must be present for the vote, or the Bill stands adjourned. That is, it goes to the bottom of the list and never gets reached again. This is a huge disappointment for some many businesses and I am also disappointed about this, and I am sure that Stephen Crabb, who put a great deal of effort into preparing and promoting his Bill and securing cross-Party support for it, is equally disappointed. This was a golden opportunity for the horse industry to effect a change in the law that it had campaigned vigorously to achieve, and to miss this chance through the absence of only a handful of MPs is very frustrating. I think that there are some lessons to be learnt about contacting members of Parliament to make sure they are present to support these private members bills.

However, I have not given up on this matter, and we are now looking at options for making the change through other legislative routes. However, this will take time, and the immediate benefits, in terms of legal certainty, that Stephen's Bill would have delivered are now as far away as ever.

Despite this we have seen successes elsewhere.

Last year England and Wales saw the Animal Welfare Act come into force along with a sister act in Scotland. These 2 Acts mark a watershed in animal welfare legislation. For the first time ever those responsible for non-farmed animals have a duty to promote animal welfare. This means that no one has to wait for an animal to start to suffer before action is taken. Its early days yet but the feedback we have received this far from the organisations on the front line - like the RSPCA - they are seeing that the new law is beginning to improve welfare standards. Where there are problems animal keepers are now more willing to be pro-active. As a result fewer cases end up in actual suffering and fewer prosecutions are brought to the courts. We need to keep this under review and feedback from you is always welcome.

Elsewhere I'm pleased to announce that after five years of discussions and negotiations, EU Member States have reached agreement on a new European Regulation that will revise existing Horse Passport legislation. Dr Alf Füssel of the Commission will be providing you with more details of this new Regulation later. Just to say that the main new requirement will be the compulsory microchipping of foals born after 1st July next year.

This new Regulation is welcome news from our standpoint. I think it will serve to strengthen current horse ID requirements and provides an important link between horse and its passport. We will be consulting industry fully on the implementation of this new Regulation very soon.

I think both us in Government and yourself in the horse industry recognise the importance of Equine Identification in exotic disease control and welfare. The various disease outbreaks last year brought into sharp focus the challenges we face in dealing with these issues now and in the years to come. I am now of the view that the best way we can reduce both the incidence and impact of animal disease when it occurs is through greater involvement of the livestock industry in all aspects of the disease control programme. This is of even greater importance when we are looking to reduce the risk of disease occurring in the first place.

In the face of last year's exotic disease outbreaks we saw how invaluable a true partnership between Government and industry can be. I believe that this cooperation and understanding needs to be taken further. We need to develop a system for the future where responsibility and cost sharing offers the industry and Government alike a greater opportunity to expand radically to our substantial mutual benefit. Responsibility and cost sharing is the means by which a fairer distribution of disease control can be established. This will provide a better reflection of where the balance of responsibility lies for managing disease risks. It will give industry a greater say and responsibility for disease control measures during outbreaks as well as sharing a fairer part of the costs. This initiative should also result in greater efficiencies, reduced risks, better decisions and more effective contingencies for risks. Although I should add at this point say that the inclusion of horses under this scheme has yet to be decided. We are currently consulting on the scope of this initiative and whether animals like the horse should be included in addition to the main farmed animals. If you haven't had an opportunity to give us your views then please do so quickly, as the consultation closes on April 15th.

Another tool that will help manage disease – specifically within our equine population is the National Equine Database. The National Equine Database records indicate that approximately 960 thousand passports have been issued. The database is an excellent example of industry and the Government working well together. I'm sure we will both reap the benefits of the database. I understand Graham Suggett will be giving you an update of the progress made since the responsibility for completing the project was passed to the British Equestrian Federation.

All of this work underpins both our Equine Health and Welfare Strategy and the parallel Horse Industry Strategy. I am sure that these documents along with the supporting Action Plans will deliver on our long-term vision of supporting the industry and achieving high standards of health and welfare for the equine population across the country. I think all of this work also demonstrates our commitment to the industry. We recognise it has an important role to play in the national economy. And a very important part to play in the rural economy and the very social fabric of the countryside. It makes a significant contribution to the economy. Employs thousands of people. Has an important role to play in environmental and land management issues. But most of all it provides millions of people – young and not so young, rich and poor, able and not so able, and last year for the first time ME! - with hours of fun and enjoyment.

And because of all this. And because of all your continued hard work on behalf of the industry. I'm very proud to be the Minister for the Horse Industry. I hope today's forum ensures that we have a good and constructive relationship and continue to work in partnership.

NATIONAL EQUINE DATABASE – The Launch

R H GRAHAM SUGGETT OBE JP DL HonDSc FIBiol FRAGS

Director of Equine Development, British Equestrian Federation. Consultant to the NED Board

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Background

In addition to the Defra requirement for a database to monitor the passport scheme and to provide information for disease surveillance and control; the concept of the National Equine Database is to provide, in one convenient and easily accessible place, accurate data about the UK horse population. Uniquely, NED links breeding with performance and, given access to such data through NED there is a chance that we can reverse the trend of buying continental horses as the buying public become more aware of the quality and potential of home-bred stock.



The establishment of the National Equine Database is a win-win situation for the equine industry.

The NED project has been enormously complicated. It has involved establishing a database capable of being used simultaneously by thousands of users worldwide at the same time and containing data collected on a regular basis from over 100 organisations all of whom use different nomenclature and storage procedures.

Up-date

For the last TWO years, Phase One of the NED development has been fully operational. This is the mechanism whereby Passport Issuing Organisations (PIOs) make an electronic monthly up-date of their data to NED. All 79 UK PIOs are using Phase One and we thank them for their cooperation. This assembled data is being used by a wide spectrum of organisations.

However, at the 2007 Forum I reported that the NED project was behind schedule and that the following week the software contractor was due to handover the completed database to the NED Team at Stoneleigh. The whole of April would then be spent in intensive testing of NED by the Team and volunteers from the equine industry.

In the event, the database was not completed to the satisfaction of the Shadow Board and Phase THREE failed User-Acceptance Testing. Phase Three being that part of NED containing pedigree and performance data. The British Equestrian Federation (BEF) was, therefore, invited to take over the project and produce a functional database. The invitation, accompanied by funding from Defra until 31st March this year, was accepted and NED Ltd, a Company Limited by Guarantee, has been established.

The small team at Stoneleigh, led by Nick Wallbridge, tackled this challenge with great gusto and since May last year they have completely re-written NED Online and I am very pleased to announce that we now have a fully functional National Equine Database which is being demonstrated here to-day.

I have rarely been so excited about a project as I am about this database. It is pleasing on the eye, easy to use, fast, contains an incredible amount of information and provides innumerable services of value to everyone concerned with equines. Once the equine industry has provided the remaining pedigree and performance data this will be a truly world-beating resource and I feel very privileged and proud to have been part of the team.

What does this mean?

It means that NED is fully operational, accommodates all the features specified for it back in 2003 and is available on-line 24/7.

NED has over 1.15 million equine records in store. Please note, however, that some of these records are suspected duplicates and some are for dead horses (valuable information for breeding purposes). In addition, NED does not contain data on equines holding non-UK EU passports which have not been overstamped by a UK PIO. I repeat that the 1.15 million is the number of records held by NED and not a figure representing the number of equines in the UK.

NED provides a link between breeding and performance data.

NED has developed a system for comparing the performance of horses across competition disciplines called the NED Performance Index (NPI). This, again, is unique in the World.

However, NED will only be as good as the data it contains. In terms of pedigree data we have Sire or Dam information on 71% of those horses and ponies known to have pedigrees. I urge all Breed Societies who have not committed themselves to providing pedigree data to NED to do so as soon as possible; in the best interests of our UK equine industry

There are many other features of NED which there is not time to fully describe; but which includes features to help buyers and sellers of horses and ponies in addition to breeders. These can be viewed at the live demonstrate in the City of London Room. In addition we have ambitious plans to further develop NED over the next few years to make it a world-beating facility.

What next?

The NED team has three objectives which it seeks to complete by Autumn 2008 at which time a charge will be made for reports generated by NED. The first objective is to obtain more pedigree and performance data and the second is to improve the quality of that data.

The third is to complete the public Beta testing. For the last nine months, every time the team has completed a section of the database, it has been sent out to a small group of selected and knowledgeable people for testing. As time has progressed, the number of testers has increased and we now intend to considerably increase the number of people involved. I am very pleased, therefore, to invite all present here to-day, together with those invited to attend, to become part of the public Beta testing programme. You will have free access to the equine data, excepting names and addresses of owners, in return for which you will be asked to provide feed-back to the team on both good points and weaknesses and suggestions for improvement. To take part all you need to do is to follow the instructions given on the handout available from Doug Stephens who is demonstrating the system in the City of London Room. Please note that

this invitation is only open to those registered with the 2008 National Equine Forum. Having worked with most of you for a very long time, I am sure that we will get a good response to take part in this testing and I, therefore, thank you in advance. Your involvement will be invaluable in developing a resource not available anywhere else in the World.

To close Mr Chairman, I thank the Minister for the financial and physical support given to the NED project over the past five years which is going to result in an invaluable, world-beating resource being made available to the UK equine industry and which is essential to underpin many of the initiatives described in the *Strategy for the Horse Industry in England and Wales*.

SANCO – THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF EU EQUINE LEGISLATION

Dr Alf-ECKBERT FÜSSEL DVM

Deputy Head of Unit European Commission DG SANCO/D1

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There is no Community legislation on live animals that integrates to such an extent animal health and animal breeding than the legislation on equidae. In particular reference is made to the following interacting Directives:

- Council Directive 90/426/EEC of 26 June 1990 on animal health conditions governing the movement and import from third countries of equidae¹.
- Council Directive 90/427/EEC of 26 June 1990 on the zootechnical and genealogical conditions governing intra-Community trade in equidae².



In addition are trade in and imports of equine semen, ova and embryos regulated by Council Directive 92/65/EEC of 13 July 1992 laying down animal health requirements governing trade in and imports into the Community of animals, semen, ova and embryos not subject to animal health requirements laid down in specific Community rules referred to in Annex A (I) to Directive 90/425/EEC³.

The scope of Directive 90/426/EC is very wide covering all equidae species independently of their domestication status and the nature of place they inhabit. The rules provided for in that Directive have considerably facilitated the movement of equidae, and horses in particular, between Member States while largely preventing spread of diseases. In accordance with the Directive it is possible, what is not foreseen in case of other livestock, to derogate from certain animal health certification requirements on a mutual agreement. The tripartite agreement between the UK, Ireland and France on movement of equidae is an example.

Since last year the Commission's Food and Veterinary Office has embarked on a series of dedicated missions, to be continued throughout 2008 and 2009, to verify the implementation of that Directive, notably following the recent accession of new Member States in which in many cases horses and donkeys are still used for hard everyday work and are less considered a luxury companion animal. This initiative must also be seen in the context of the certain equine disease, the implementation of the passport system to ensure food safety and the welfare problems during transport.

Based on this Directive the Commission, after consultation of the Member States, has laid down the animal health conditions for the importation of equidae:

- Commission Decision 2004/211/EC of 6 January 2004 establishing the list of third countries and parts of territory thereof from which Member States authorise imports of live equidae and semen, ova and embryos of the equine species⁴, which also provides the regionalisation, limitations to certain categories of equidae and certain types of importation
- Commission Decision 92/260/EEC of 10 April 1992 on animal health conditions and veterinary certification for temporary admission of registered horses⁵

¹ OJ L 224, 18.8.1990, p. 42.

² OJ L 224, 18.8.1990, p. 55.

³ OJ L 268, 14.9.1992, p. 54.

⁴ OJ L 73, 11.3.2004, p. 1.

⁵ OJ L 130, 15.5.1992, p. 67.

- Commission Decision 93/195/EEC of 2 February 1993 on animal health conditions and veterinary certification for the re-entry of registered horses for racing, competition and cultural events after temporary export⁶
- Commission Decision 93/196/EEC of 5 February 1993 on animal health conditions and veterinary certification for imports of equidae for slaughter⁷
- Commission Decision 93/197/EEC of 5 February 1993 on animal health conditions and veterinary certification for imports of registered equidae and equidae for breeding and production⁸

The animal health conditions for imports are established according to the following principles:

1. the exporting country is listed following a veterinary inspection mission carried out by the Commission's Food and Veterinary Office;
2. where necessary the third country is regionalised for disease reasons or animal health control purposes and importation may be limited to certain categories of equidae or types of importation, registered horses having a privileged position;
3. general and specific the animal health conditions relating to the country and holding of origin and vaccination testing and quarantine requirements according to the sanitary group to which the exporting country is assigned.

Directive 90/426/EEC introduced a new category of livestock – the registered equidae - describing them as those equidae registered either in a studbook approved in accordance with Directive 90/427/EEC or with an international organisation managing competitions or races. Equidae for breeding and production that are sometimes confused with the studbook-registered equidae, are, together with equidae for slaughter, a common livestock category in EU animal health legislation.

Registered equidae enjoy certain privileges as regards their movements between Member States. They need to be accompanied by their passport in conjunction with a 10 days valid health attestation that does not indicate the origin and destination of the animals and thereby does not trigger a message in the Community TRACES system. Registered equidae do have, in addition, certain derogations as regards welfare during transport in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1/2005⁹.

In the framework of Community public and animal health legislation equidae are considered food producing animals with far reaching consequences not least related to certain medicinal products applied by way of derogation from the general rules applicable to food producing animals to equidae properly identified.

The above conditions highlight the importance of identification and for this reason the Commission has adopted Decisions 93/623/EEC¹⁰ on the identification of registered equidae that was applicable for any registered foal born after the 1 January 1998, and Decision 2000/68/EC¹¹ establishing the identification document for equidae for breeding and production that is applicable since 1 July 2000. However both Decisions have been implemented differently in Member States, as can be verified in the appropriate mission reports on the SANCO website¹² not least due to the following immanent constraints:

1. the dichotomy of registered and equidae for breeding and production that cannot guarantee a single passport per animal;
2. the requirement of having a passport only when moving, which leaves animals allegedly resident on a single holding outside the identification system;
3. the weak link between the animal and its passport on the basis of a outline diagram rarely completed by an expert and seldom updated throughout life, for example in case of castration, grey, spotted and paint horses or uni-coloured breeds;
4. the absence of specific provisions on the identification of equidae for slaughter;
5. missing replacement procedures in case of loss of the passport;
6. lack of procedures for the registration of the identification document under a unique life number, that ensures a continuous reference point whenever identification details are exchanged;
7. the missing clarity on the role and responsibilities of approved breeding organisations as passport-issuing bodies in the identification system for equidae.

⁶ OJ L 86, 6.4.1993, p. 1.

⁷ OJ L 86, 6.4.1993, p. 7.

⁸ OJ L 86, 6.4.1993, p. 16.

⁹ OJ L 3, 5.1.2005, p. 1.

¹⁰ OJ L 298, 3.12.1993, p. 45.

¹¹ OJ L 10, 14.1.2000, p. 1.

¹² http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/ir_search_en.cfm

These insufficiencies were identified by the sector, administrations, breeding organisations, veterinary surgeons and of course by the Commission services whether during veterinary inspection missions or certain disease control measures, as for example in case of equine infectious anaemia in 2006.

As early as 2002 the Commission launched the elaboration of a proposal for a new piece of legislation addressing those issues that has most recently received a favourable opinion of Member States in a combined meeting of the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and animal Health and the Standing Committee for Zootechnics.

The main elements of the approved proposal are the following:

1. while the legal basis for the Regulation has remained, the legislative environment for it has considerably improved, notably Directive 2001/82/EC¹³ on veterinary medicines and the food law have incorporated the equine passport; The preamble to this Regulation clarifies exhaustively the various cross-cutting relationships with other pieces of EC legislation.
2. the format of a Regulation limits the possibility of different implementation in various Member States and is directly addressed not only to the competent authorities but equally to keepers, veterinary surgeons, slaughter houses etc.;
3. the role of the breeding organisations approved in accordance with Decision 92/353/EEC¹⁴ and the rules on entry of equidae into studbooks laid down in Decision 96/78/EC¹⁵ have been observed, clarified and even reinforced; In addition the Regulation establishes the certificate of origin, so far not harmonised, and thus makes the passport also for breeding purposes the central and unique document of reference;
4. by default equidae are considered food producing animals and they shall not be kept unless they are properly identified by a single lifelong identification document – this requirements applies to any animal being kept or born or imported into the EU independently of the movement of the animal;
5. the issuing of the passport is recorded under a unique life number in a database that remains a constant reference point for any modification or adaptation of identification details;
6. in order to reinforce the link between the identification document and the animal and to avoid double passports, micro chipping of foals born after the 1 July 2009 will be mandatory;
7. detailed rules on the replacement of documents in case of loss have been established that in general exclude the animal from the food chain.

Of course, this Regulation would not be European if it had not included a number of derogations which can be summaries as follows:

1. there are provisions on alternative methods for identity verification that must provide the same guarantees as the microchip and, more important, leave a trace signalling that this animal has been identified, in order to avoid double passports; Alternative methods also help to address known problems of the identification of equidae in zoos.
2. specific derogations are provided for equidae under wild or semi-wild conditions;
3. identification is simplified for equidae for slaughter under 1 year of age;
4. simplified identification documents – smart cards – are possible.

There is one important element still missing in the system of identification registration of equidae and this is the registration of holdings and recording of movements. As there is no legal basis in Directive 90/426/EEC for such a requirements, and because the food law is not precise about a keeper of an equine animal as a food chain operator, it was left to the upcoming discussions on the New Community Animal Health Strategy¹⁶ to clarify the position of the Community as regards holding registration, what is the easy part, and the controls on the movements - on national territory – of equidae, the most mobile segment of Community livestock.

"ALLES GLÜCK DER ERDE LIEGT AUF DEM RÜCKEN DER PFERDE"

(All luck on earth is on the back of a horse – German proverb)

¹³ OJ L 311, 28.11.2001, p. 1.

¹⁴ OJ L 192, 11.7.1992, p. 63.

¹⁵ OJ L 19, 25.1.1996, p. 39.

¹⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/strategy/index_en.htm

WHAT DEVOLUTION HAS MEANT TO EQUESTRIANISM IN SCOTLAND

Dr TIM WATSON BVM&S, PhD, MRCVS

Chairman Scottish Equestrian Association

The passing of the Scotland Act 1998 paved the way for the first elections to the first Scottish Parliament for almost 300 years. Initially known as the Scottish Executive and now the Scottish Government, the current administration was formed after elections in May 2007. Unlike Westminster, the Scottish Parliament does not have a second chamber to revise legislation that comes before it and The House of Lords no longer considers Scottish legislation on devolved matters. A number of devolved issues have important bearings on equestrianism, including health, education and training, tourism, economic development and financial assistance to industry, aspects of transport, the environment, agriculture and sport. There can be no doubt that the process of devolution has presented challenges to equestrian sports and industry in Scotland, but with these have come real opportunities for development and growth. The purpose of this presentation is to review these challenges and opportunities, as well as the impact of devolution upon Scottish equestrianism.



Scotland is home to some 5 million people and it is estimated that some 200,000 of these ride, drive or vault every week. There are approximately 100,000 horses and 500 plus riding clubs and schools. Upwards of 3000 individuals compete each week and around 27,500 Scots are members of equestrian associations. Equestrianism has a value to the Scottish economy in excess of £200 million. However, prior to devolution, its equestrian sector merely represented a small (about 10%) component of the UK picture and was very much the ‘tail on the dog’, even though we really did try to wag hard! Working within the UK structure was difficult, especially dealing with a remote government that was tuned into the needs and aspirations of its majority population South of Hadrian’s Wall. While this changed with devolution, allowing much more direct contact with Government, it has meant that Scottish equestrianism has had to develop a strong, professional and politic body.

The formation of the Scottish Equestrian Association (SEA) in 1998, and subsequent launch by the Princess Royal in 1999, ensured that equestrianism in Scotland did not lose its voice during the process of devolution. It was immediately recognised by the Scottish Executive and sportscotland – the national agency for sport – as the representative body for all equestrian activities. The vision of SEA is to lead, guide and enable the Scottish equestrian sector to achieve higher levels of participation, development and excellence. SEA has grown to encompass 17 Full and 9 Associate members, including bodies as diverse as *Jumpcross Scotland*, *Scottish Countryside Alliance* and *Scottish Racing*, as well as the major sporting disciplines. Following a modernisation process, SEA became a Limited Company in December 2004 with two permanent staff and is run by a Board of Directors with responsibility for areas such as performance, facilities, sports development, breeding and welfare volunteers, finance and governance. The growth and development of SEA has been largely enabled by funding from sportscotland, together with an individual membership scheme that was launched in 2006. On a day-to-day basis, SEA is responsible for matters such as The UK Coaching Certificate in Scotland, equity, child protection, volunteer charter and policy, health and safety and disclosure checks. Other challenges that we presently face include anomalies with the rest of the UK on matters such as rates relief, Single Farm Payments (since horses are not included in Scotland), and horse passport legislation.

Scotland aspires to be ‘the best small country in the World’ and passionately believes in the benefits of sport, from the enjoyment and sense of achievement that participation brings, to the shared pride that national success generates. Good progress is being made on legislative matters relating to horse welfare, ragwort and the licensing of livery yards. The present Government has also made a clear and loud commitment to rural communities, which is best exemplified by the Scotland Rural Development Programme with the commitment of £58 million to grow local economies, improve rural facilities and conserve the environment. It has been refreshing to find that the present Government appreciates the contribution and importance of equestrianism to the rural economy, and it is SEA’s task to ensure that the equestrian sector captures maximum benefit from funding initiatives such as this.

A COMMON SENSE APPROACH TO HEALTH AND SAFETY LEGISLATION

LINDA WHETSTONE

Chairman of the British Equestrian Federation Council

Of course we all want to be healthy and safe but how does that very normal instinct mutate into the incomprehensible web of regulation that stifles so many useful and relatively harmless activities.

Regulation is not just frustrating it is also very, very expensive. Why do we seem to get more regulations than most of us think is useful? How does the process work? Can regulations actually increase risk and are there alternative ways of dealing with danger?



Health and Safety Regulations exist to protect us from risk and are driven by pressure from groups of people who expect to benefit from them. Bureaucrats are commonly believed to be the main culprits but private interests in various guises are often the main drivers.

Although ever stricter regulation may reduce risk for some people it can very easily increase total risk because of unintended and originally unforeseen consequences.

Apart from regulation there is a variety of possible private solutions to managing risk which need to be considered ahead of regulation, because they can be cheaper, more flexible and better able to balance the benefits against the costs.

These include insurance, voluntary certification schemes, trade marks, trade associations, consumer associations, branding and last but not least the importance of reputation in a competitive market all of which offer possible voluntary solutions to perceived risk.

If further regulation seems to be the only possibility then concrete proof of the perceived risk must be produced, potential side effects considered and all costs involved clearly identified so that the costs and benefits can be measured against each other. It must be demonstrated that no existing regulation already covers the issue and there should be a sunset clause so that regulations which are not achieving their goal, or whose unintended consequences increase rather than reduce risk, are short lived.

THE 2008 OLYMPICS - HEALTH AND WELFARE CHALLENGES FOR HORSES

JOHN McEWEN BVMS MRCVS.

Chairman Veterinary Committee. Federation Equestre International

The challenge presented by the predicted climate in Hong Kong during the Olympic Games is well recognised. It has monitored over the last three years to assess the problems presented to the performance horse. Virtual and test events have been successfully run and the competing horses carefully monitored. The results of work performed by the leading world experts in their field have been collated to ensure best practice and to produce a successful Games.

Every Olympic venue presents its own challenge for every sport. In Los Angeles we had concerns about smog and air quality, Seoul had climate and venue challenges, Barcelona had a storm that blew the fences down, Atlanta had heat and humidity problems, Sydney had long distance travel and quarantine issues, and Athens had air pollution and heat issues. Each venue has presented different challenges which we have analysed and dealt with successfully.

The Veterinary Challenges in Hong Kong

The assessment of the Veterinary challenges presented fall into similar categories for each venue;

Export/Import issues and local disease status.

Strict Export /Import protect our horses and protect the Racing population in Hong Kong. The recent influenza outbreaks in Australia and Japan have resulted in changes in the protocol.

Transport issues.

Peden Bloodstock have arranged transportation the horses. At the test event this was the slickest transport of horses that I have seen and I have flown horses to major events on more than 60 occasions over 27 years.

Facilities.



Hong Kong Jockey Club have provided the most fantastic facilities that have been built for the 2008 Games.

Climate.

For competition in Hong Kong the major issue of concern for horses is being able to compete safely and to have good competition is the climate, heat, humidity and air quality. Prof Leo Jeffcott, the Veterinary Delegate to the 2008 Olympic Games, instigated a review of the climatic challenge in 2005 and since that time has put a great deal of time and thought into the preparation of the Games. He has made many venue visits which have included virtual events, and the test event. His reports have been of huge value to all involved.

Test Event

The Organising Committee ran a very meaningful Test Event which not just to allow systems to be checked out and for Prof Jeffcott to run his high tech weather station, and for us to monitor horses competing in the prevailing climate. I felt that there was a huge advantage to pooling the information gained to produce best practice advice for all competing this year at the Olympic Games. The FEI funded Dr David Marlin's monitoring of the environment and air quality in the working areas, to produce essential background information required for relevance assessment of the information obtained from the monitoring of the horses competing. The FEI and the HKJC provided funding for blood sample analysis. Longsighted Federations who pooled their information, enabling FEI to analyse and produce general advice for the welfare and performance of all horses competing. I am personally grateful to the British Equestrian Federations for their support. I am well aware of the cost of sending horses and personnel to the test event and applaud their unselfish attitude to this project for the good of all.

Competition Environment

The Director of Veterinary Department Dr Frits Sluyter, Director Olympic & Eventing Departments Catrin Norinder, Professor Jeffcott and I, have had very close contact with the Organising Committee, the Olympic Equestrian Company, the Hong Kong Jockey Club and the transporters Peden Bloodstock. This communication has helped to refine issues of transport, quarantine, competition schedules, facilities, and specialist issues e.g. cooling, etc. In my opinion this has produced the best competition environment for the horses. I think that the horses are better catered for than the riders!

Conclusion

- The climate may be a challenge but we have the data and expertise to ensure that horses are able to perform safely at their best.
- Welfare of the horses has been paramount in the planning process. They will be better looked after than the riders!
- Horses were well able to meet the challenge of Competition in Hong Kong Aug 07.
- Excellent Air con facilities allowed comfortable post exercise recovery.
- Minimal active Acclimation + Passive acclimation was successful.
- To perform at their best, the horses and riders need to be better prepared and managed (before and during) than at other Championships.
- Monitoring during preparation and competition must be maximal for success.
- Cooling techniques are important for all disciplines.

We are ensuring that we leave no stone unturned and the Games will be exceptional.

THE 2008 OLYMPICS - HEALTH AND WELFARE CHALLENGES FOR HUMANS

Dr PETER WHITEHEAD MD

MO BEF World Class Performance

The equestrian events of the 2008 Olympic Games will take place in Hong Kong during August. At this time of year we can expect both high temperatures and high humidity, with dangers of heat exhaustion and dehydration.

A very successful test event in August 2007 gave an opportunity to monitor the climate and competition conditions for riders. It also provided an opportunity to study the effects of jet-lag, the hotel facilities and food available. Transport to and from the event venue, security and event medical facilities were all examined.

The test event highlighted the absolute need for correct preparation, including rider fitness, acclimatisation, strategies to avoid dehydration, and strategies for active cooling of riders.



Strategies

a) Early

Rider fitness programmes are in progress, which will aid acclimatisation.

Fluid intake is being monitored whilst competing in the UK, raising awareness of the problems of dehydration.

Heat chambers throughout the UK have been identified for riders to have early “heat experience”.

Vaccination programmes have been instigated early, to avoid any possible adverse effects close to competing.

b) After Selection

A more intensive educational programme will be instigated regarding travel, the venue, acclimation/acclimatisation and avoiding dehydration.

Strategies to minimise jet lag and travel fatigue will be discussed with individuals.

Personal medical examinations take place.

The Olympic Village

In Hong Kong the team village is a hotel 10 minutes away from the venue. The facilities are excellent, although my veterinary colleagues feel that the horses are better catered for! The riders’ diet is extremely important and, unlike the horses who can only eat what is put in front of them, riders must be persuaded not to be too exotic in their nutrition.

At previous Olympic Venues the British Olympic Association has provided a medical centre, available for competitors in all sports. In Hong Kong the British Equestrian team will need to be totally self-sufficient.

The Competition Venue

The site is small for such a competition and rest areas are unfortunately few.

Cooling techniques have been identified both for training and competition, some of which were used at the test event; some will be tested through the domestic season.

Medical facilities at the venue are excellent with the highest standards of western medicine. The medical personnel have little knowledge of equestrian sport, but are arranging equestrian specific medical courses and are visiting various equestrian venues in the UK.

Conclusion

The 2008 Olympic Games will be a great challenge, but we have done an enormous amount to enable our riders to perform at their best.

AN ANALYSIS OF PRE-PARTURIENT AND POSTNATAL EVENTS IN THOROUGHBREDS

SORAYA MORSCHER BSc (Hons)

Winner of the 2007 Eqvalan Duo Thesis of the Year Competition

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Foaling or parturition in the mare is often described as an explosive event, because of its rapid nature. Due to the great economic value of thoroughbred foals, it is imperative to establish early on whether delivery of the foal and events surrounding birth are within normal ranges. Any aberration can pose significant risk to the mare and foal. Parturition is divided into three stages, where each stage can be indicative of health and welfare of the mare and foal. Essential foal behaviours that should occur within the first few hours of extra-uterine life can potentially affect further development and even impede on adult athletic ability. This investigation sought to establish normal aspects of equine birth and to identify potential factors affecting this.



Previous studies described patterns seen during the foaling process, such as the time of foaling where mares clearly preferred the hours of darkness (Rossdale and Short, 1967, Bain and Howey, 1975). In the light of changing husbandry and management practise it was essential to complete a comprehensive study on all parameters surrounding the birthing process and early foal behaviours in a normal setting.

The study sample included 1,297 births over 13 years, from 1993 to 2006. All information was retrieved from foaling reports from a large public stud farm in Ireland. The information collected included: Date of birth, mare parity, mare age, time of rupture of the first bag of waters, time when foal was on the ground, time when foal successfully stood, time when foal successfully nursed, time when meconium (first faeces) was expelled, time of expulsion of the placental membranes, foal sex, foal weight, presence of red bag and difficulties during foaling.

The average gestation length of thoroughbred mares was 340 days. Mares bred earlier in the year and maiden mares showed a shorter gestation length, whereas colt foals were carried two days longer than filly foals and heavier foals were also carried longer. The majority of mares (83%) foaled during the night with the highest proportion foaling between 8pm and 10pm. It took the mares an average of 17.5 min to foal with 99% of mares completing the birth process in under an hour. Mares experiencing difficulties during foaling were on average 6 minutes slower to deliver their foals and also heavier foals were delivered slower than lighter foals. Most mares remained recumbent throughout the birth process with only 3.6% foaling in a standing position. The incidence of red bag presentation is

described to affect usually only 1% of mares, the findings in this study suggest it is much higher (6.3%). With increasing mare age and with an increase in the number of deliveries red bag deliveries are more frequent. Older mares and those that have had more foals were at higher risk of red bag. Difficulties during delivery were found to affect 17% of mares, which was considerably higher than previously indicated from veterinary studies. Difficulties during foaling occurred more frequently in mares giving birth to heavier foals. Expulsion of the afterbirth took an average of 40 min. This duration was prolonged in births with difficulties and reduced when a red bag delivery was present.

Foals stood within 48 min of birth. Colt foals, foals born under difficult circumstances, foals born following red bags and those born to maiden mares took significantly longer to stand. The next landmark for a foal is the successful suckling of the mare, which the foals managed on average after 92 min. Foals born to maiden mares and colt foals were slower to suckle. Meconium excretion took on average 34 min. Very light foals took longer, as did fillies, foals born to mares that had more than one prior foal and foals delivered with difficulty. Foals weighed on average 53.7 kg at birth. Colt foals were heavier than fillies and maiden mares produced lighter foals.

In summary the study provides important baseline data on foaling events and early foal behaviour in the light of changing husbandry and management practices. Furthermore it highlights the high incidence of red bag presentations and the high incidence of difficulties during foaling in a stud-farm setting.

NATURAL HORSEMANSHIP – A BALANCED VIEW

Dr. DEBORAH GOODWIN BSc PhD FLS

University of Southampton

The recent popularity of Natural Horsemanship has created something often difficult to achieve in the equestrian industry - change! Natural Horsemanship trainers have produced a cultural change in thinking and approach to horse:human interactions. These changes extend from individual horse owners through to conventional training organizations, including the BHS, who dubbed 2007 “The Year of Equine Ethology”. Academic equine ethologists were very interested in these developments, but became concerned at the way that some Natural Horsemanship trainers presented “Equine Ethology”. Often personal opinions were claimed to be facts, without any associated objective study of horse behaviour in the natural or domestic environment.



Good Natural Horsemanship trainers are talented observers of horse behaviour and can detect and respond precisely to subtle cues during horse training. They have demonstrated their ability to exploit the marketplace and teach their methods for commercial reward. Unfortunately, not all followers of these methods are as effective as the originating trainers. Inaccurate application can lead to poor results, disappointment and eventually frustration in people, which may result in abuse, confusion and conflict behavior in horses.

It is beguiling to think that we can learn to “speak horse”, impose our will on horses by understanding their behavior; even exert dominance over them, and that as a result horses will respect our leadership. Though attractive, unfortunately these ideas are inherently flawed and potentially problematic. We have no evidence that horses perceive us as “honorary horses”, or that we can insert ourselves into their social organization. Such beliefs can cause problems when things go wrong. When this happens does it mean that we are “poor leaders”, or that our horses don’t “respect” us? Or is there a simpler explanation? Have we simply failed to successfully train correct responses to our cues?

Scientists studying horse behaviour and training have been prompted by the success of Natural Horsemanship trainers in achieving cultural change to take a more active approach in communicating their work to horse owners and trainers. The recently formed International Society for Equitation Science <http://www.equitationsscience.com/> aims to encourage this communication between equine science professionals and practitioners. Science has much to offer in advancing techniques in horse training and reducing wastage by objectively assessing what does and does not work, and most importantly, why? Trainers can be helped to be more effective through improving their understanding of how horses learn and the correct application of learning theory in training.

Calibrated rein tension gauges and pressure sensitive spurs can measure the strength of aids used to communicate a rider’s intentions to the horse. Riders and trainers can integrate technology into their training methods to understand contact and lightness objectively. Performance and welfare assessment is now possible via heart rates, gait analysis, blood, urine and saliva analyses plus other well accepted physiological measures.

Equitation scientists, conventional and Natural Horsemanship trainers aim to help people train horses more effectively. It is vital that we share our knowledge to achieve these goals, as when training fails the horse suffers, and may pay the ultimate price with its life.

STRANGLES – AN UP-DATE

Professor JOSH SLATER MRCVS

Professor of Equine Clinical Studies, Royal Veterinary College

Presented on the day by **Professor PAT HARRIS** MA PhD DipECVCN VetMB MRCVS

Director of Science Mars Horsecare UK Ltd, Equine Studies Group, WALTHAM

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Introduction. Strangles is one of the most common bacterial equine infectious diseases, occurring worldwide and affecting all branches of the equine industry. Strangles infection causes enormous welfare problems and disease outbreaks have huge economic impact. Although the UK horse industry faces disease threats from 'exotic' diseases including equine infectious anaemia, West Nile virus and African horse sickness, providing better control of highly contagious endemic diseases like strangles remains at the top of the scientific agenda. Because of this, the strangles bacterium has been the subject of considerable research effort in the UK and abroad. It receives a high priority for funding from the equine welfare charities, notably the Horse Trust, as well as the Horserace Betting Levy Board and a variety of other funding agencies. The pharmaceutical industry has organised awareness campaigns and there can scarcely be a horse owner who is not concerned about the impact strangles would have were it to enter their yard or infect their horse.



New developments in strangles research (2004-2008)

The complete genome sequence of the strangles bacterium was completed by the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute (www.sanger.ac.uk) in 2006 with funding from the Horse Trust. This provides scientists with the complete map of the organism's 1,800 genes: a vital tool for understanding how the bacterium works. This information has already led to important discoveries, several made at the Animal Health Trust, Newmarket, which have advanced our understanding of strangles virulence, provided for better diagnostic tests and advanced the work to develop new vaccines.

Comparison of the strangles bacterium genome (*Streptococcus equi*) with a closely-related, but less virulent, equine respiratory pathogen (*Streptococcus zooepidemicus*), has led to the identification of unique genetic regions in the strangles genome which may account for its virulence, including one with similarity to a virulence mechanism in *Yersinia pestis*, the cause of human plague. Other projects have identified virulence genes required for colonisation of the equine respiratory tract and the ability to evade the horse's immune system: key information for vaccine design. The genome project makes genetic typing of strangles possible. This can be real aid in outbreak investigation and this genetic test is now available commercially through the Animal Health Trust.

A new blood test has just (March 2008) been launched, again by the Animal Health Trust, which identifies horses that have been infected with strangles with almost 100% accuracy for several months after infection. This test will be useful during outbreaks by helping to segregate horses into infected and non-infected groups, as well as helping with the identification of carriers. Importantly it will greatly enhance the implementation of strangles control programmes (visit www.hblb.org.uk for a downloadable Strangles Code of Practice) by identifying low-risk horses. Further improvements to current strangles molecular diagnostic tests are expected in the UK in 2008, following similar developments in the USA.

Surveillance of field outbreaks in the UK and abroad has provided better information about clinical disease and confirmed that classical signs of strangles (abscesses) often only develop in a minority of horses: most develop mild disease but are still contagious and may go on to become chronic carriers, despite having had only mild disease.

An effective vaccine would have a big impact on strangles control. A new strangles vaccine (Equilis Strep-E) was launched across Europe in 2005, but is currently not available because of technical problems. Potential new vaccines are currently being evaluated for safety and efficacy by scientists in the UK and Scandinavia and we are likely to see further strangles vaccines become available commercially in the next 3-5 years.

EXOTIC DISEASE THREAT TO THE UK

BRIGADIER PAUL D JEPSON, BVetM, MRCVS, PhD

Chief Executive, The Horse Trust

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KEY POINTS:

- African Horse sickness; Swamp Fever; West Nile Virus
- Spread by insects
- Climatic change increases likelihood of spread
- Spread by insects
- Potential to devastate UK horse industry
- Draconian control measures necessary
- Problem of symptomless carriers
- Safe, effective vaccines essential
- Awareness and vigilance



The UK horse population is vulnerable to 3 diseases that would normally be associated with distant foreign climes. They are all caused by viruses, all require insects for transmission, and the threat they pose to the UK is associated in varying degrees to global warming. The diseases are: West Nile Virus, Swamp Fever (Equine Infectious Anaemia) and African Horse Sickness. The most devastating of all is African Horse Sickness which if it were to come to this country has the potential to devastate the equestrian industry and all organised equestrian activity would cease for an indeterminate period.

West Nile Virus is a disease of birds but it is transmissible to horses and to humans by certain species of mosquito. The virus attacks the nervous system typically causing paralysis. The disease is widespread in USA and is controlled by vaccination. Blood samples from birds indicate the presence of the virus in the UK although no human or horse infections have as yet been reported – probably because of the current absence of the mosquito vector.

Swamp Fever brought the racing industry in Ireland to a standstill in 2006. The virus is transmitted from horse to horse by biting horseflies. Once infected, animals that recover from the initial illness remain infective for life. It is controlled by slaughter of infected animals and compulsory blood tests of horses imported from outside the EU and Romania, which is the only EU country where it is endemic.

African Horse Sickness poses the biggest threat although it does not currently exist in Europe. It is not transmissible to man but an uncontrolled outbreak in the UK's susceptible horse population could produce a 90% death rate of infected animals. The disease is transmitted from horse to horse by biting midges of the same culicoides family that we associate with sweet itch. The virus and its insect vector are very similar to those causing Bluetongue in cattle and sheep and the presence of Bluetongue in the UK is proof that African Horse Sickness could reach us now that the climate is sufficiently mild to enable the virus to replicate in the insect. Although a major set back for our farming industry, the Bluetongue outbreak has provided invaluable lessons in control measures which can be applied to African Horse Sickness.

Symptomless carriers of disease are a problem and it is known that donkeys, zebra and the rhinoceros are capable of harbouring African Horse Sickness. A programme of testing samples from overseas including other exotic species has been initiated to determine the extent of the carrier problem. The Horse Trust is leading a working party of specialists that is working with DEFRA to ensure that the UK is as well prepared as possible to deal with an outbreak. Awareness rather than panic is the theme of the campaign. The worst scenario would be an outbreak of African Horse Sickness in a "backstreet" pony that would probably go unrecognised allowing the disease to gain a foothold. Everyone dealing with horses must be aware of the possibility and any suspicious death or illness reported and investigated.

The development of a new, safe and effective vaccine is a major objective in controlling African Horse Sickness. Merial will be trialling such a vaccine in 2008 but further development and production of the vaccine depends on a commercial market for the product which will be used by the government to control outbreaks rather than being available to the horse owning public for general prophylactic use, which in the UK would undermine our valuable disease free status. The working party is seeking EU support for production of an effective vaccine but vigilance remains the key to early detection.

A PERSONAL VIEW

HRH The Princess Royal KG KT GCVO QSO

It is always a pleasure to join you at the Forum, even more importantly as so many of you are here. It is due to your Chairman and your Convenor Graham Suggett and all their active work that so many of you come. The Forum does have a reputation for producing very good debate and very informative talks, not least this year which is very good indeed. The Thesis of the Year student did very well, thank you very much for that, although I am slightly more worried now than I was an hour ago about a mare that might be foaling this week; although this is the one that had strangles and foaled while she had strangles. They seem to be alright but it will be interesting to see what happens next.



I think I am here not so much to give a personal view but more as a “sweeper upper” for one or two subjects that may have been missed but are part of the broader national equine concerns. Some of these have been touched upon in the past and some are related to subjects you have been talking about today. One of those has been the Olympic Games and riders’ or horses’ health matters, another is Coaching – certainly an area of concern and will continue to be in the future in terms of having enough people to be coaches. We heard last year about the work underway to develop the UK Coaching certificates. There are now some 460 UKCC qualified coaches awaiting graduation or practising. That is quite rapid progress. Sports Coach UK have been very supportive and they have awarded equestrian sport the Trailblazer Sport Credit; no mean achievement in such a large and complex group of member bodies working as part of the Federation. I would like to say thank you to all those who have been involved in working so well together in this vital area because everyone will benefit from supporting this approach to coaching.

The other area is also related in some ways to the Olympic Games. This is the British Equestrian Federation’s business support partnership with the John Lewis Partnership, and that really is an example of a spin off from the Olympic Games. And I say spin off because the John Lewis Partnership was one of those approached for support under the Tier Two sponsorship programme. They thought that that was too much for them to take on, but were very keen at some level to support Olympic Sport, particularly for 2012. They have come in as a partner for the British Equestrian Federation and I think that will be a really good deal which should be interesting for everybody. There is the possibility of developing economies of scale in working in the fields of databases and IT, generating useful data and convincing others of the scale of the industry based on hard facts. I think the Partnership will be of great help to the Federation and I hope they will find it useful to their own people as well they will be engaging in a sport that may be different for them and giving them a connection which they may not have had before.

I have to say one of the things I am most pleased about and you have already heard about, but I just need to underline this, is a very big three cheers to Graham Suggett and the National Equine Database. As you know I have been banging on about it for quite a long time, though not quite as long as him. It is really good to see it has reached this stage and is up and running but it is important not only that we ask the questions about how to use it but we must use it - that is how it is going to be financially sustainable and that is how it will become more flexible and better for everybody within the industry to use. We need to use it as often as possible whether we are buying a horse or breeding from a horse and to use it to ensure that we are getting the right information. Now it is properly launched we need to use it or we will lose it. I am going to sneak out early for a preview as I also need to learn how to use it.

The other part of the Games is the legacy issue, and that has been touched on here before, not only by me, but by Barbara Cassani who, last year, explained the BEF’s plans. There are some very good signs there that some new equestrian centres will be established and that the network developed under Hoof-Ride London is currently working. As those plans continue to unfold we will need to provide our full support for the legacies put in place.

There are 4 main planks to the strategy, of which I am sure you are aware:

- To establish new riding schools, working closely with Local Authorities.
- Bringing together all equestrian related activity in London by identifying and creating a community - the London Horse Network
- Establish the London Festival of the Horse to bring back the high level of competition to London hopefully using the Royal Parks
- Establish a schools programme that, together with the National Riding Festival and its methods for getting schools involved, could make a tremendous difference.

That is good news. It means that all of the equine areas are working better together to demonstrate a more joined-up picture to everybody, and are looking at ways of selling themselves and showing how good they are for individuals.

There were two very interesting papers on infectious diseases, Strangles and African Horse Sickness, though they did have a flavour of Corporal Fraser "we are all doomed" about them. Thank you for the hugely encouraging talk! But you are right; we do need to be more aware.

Strangles is an issue, certainly in terms of my experience where I only heard later, through chatting with a Vet, that he was dealing with an outbreak on the other side of Cirencester. The fact that it isn't a notifiable disease does mean there is an element of non-speaks about it, partly out of loyalty to the establishments. That's a difficult one to get round, in terms of making certain people understand where the disease is and how not to make those connections. But the information is out there, it is accessing it that will be the problem.

Infectious diseases in this country and the European perspective are very important because there are assumptions that all travel movement, both of people and animals within that area, has been simplified. Travel is, therefore, easier and some of the checks that used to be in place no longer exist because of this. The comment about New Zealand is right about the lack of those types of restrictions and the ability to do what they like about controls. I think the evidence is that they have done quite well but it is a fairly draconian system and it would be quite difficult to operate within a European context anyway. So the only other option is vigilance and understanding what the problems are and recognising when they occur. We do need to know that.

Abuse of horses within our own islands is relatively fresh in our minds because of the Amersham case. As it is sub judice it is not for me to talk about it but the vigilance issue is the same. We all recognise when welfare is good or bad, how we do anything about it is rather more difficult. We do not expect people to come and bang on our doors and tell us that we are not looking after our horses well enough because they look different to theirs. My definition of a fit horse and that of somebody in the show world would be entirely different and it is not for me to comment. That's their business frankly and this is where the problem arises- there are differences. And I have to say, that although I found that the balanced view on Natural Horsemanship was very interesting I thought Natural Horsemanship was what I did when I was much younger, with no hard hat on, riding bareback with a halter, riding one and leading 4. And if you made it, that was a success and if you didn't you would try something different the next time. A lot better than doing it off the bicycle I have to say. These issues do make life difficult, and definitions are part of them.

In terms of how you apply vigilance, you apply it through groups that already have respect within the industry. In this case the BHS together with the Horse Trust have conceived the idea, in direct response to the Amersham case, of setting up a working party of those organisations that do have a voice within the welfare of horses, to come together to look at how things might have been done differently, what did work and didn't work within that. General Robert Gordon has agreed to chair that working party and I hope all of those bodies will respond as openly as possible because it is patently in the interests of not just us as interested parties, but of everybody else to make sure our vigilance is the right sort of vigilance that has somewhere to go, that will be properly followed up and that we are aware of what is going on. We all know that someone hammering on your door telling you how to do things is not necessarily being vigilant. The difference between vigilant and being plain old interfering is a very thin dividing line.

I have often wondered about the training manuals for horses, as it has always struck me that you can train a horse any way you like because if it works for you and the horse that's fine - all it means is that no one else can ride it. And how you describe that in psychological terms I do not know.

But this year in other ways is going to be very interesting. We have had a very encouraging look at the Olympic Games and the venue in Hong Kong and the thoroughness with which that has been approached, and we can but wish our representatives and competitors well when they get there. The next stage of course is looking forward to the next games in Britain, and that will require a degree of thoroughness on our behalves that hasn't happened for a while and it will be a very interesting challenge for us to be able to move forward from a very specific environment in Hong Kong to one which we think we recognise and understand, but it will be different because it is an Olympic Games and they always are.

We can look forward in that period to this organisation, the Equine Forum, bringing these important issues to light and giving people the opportunity to bring their own knowledge and experience along to it. And to help us look at not just the subjects already discussed and that have been of concern but at other areas that concern us as horse owners, as a working part of the industry, and to bring them together as far as possible. Your chairman has already said that there are a lot of people involved in making that possible, and I would like to underline Graham Suggett's contribution to making this Forum such an important event in the equine year, for his constant support of it whilst managing to develop the National Equine Database

at the same time – that seems extraordinary. It seems only fair for him to step back from his convenor role because he has so many other things going on, but we know that we will not lose his incredible knowledge and support for this organisation. I am not going to mention passage of time as Sir Colin has a huge advantage over all of us which I think he is going to maintain for a few years to come because we keep celebrating it often enough. He can't possibly get away with it and is going to have to stay.

On behalf of everybody here I would like particularly to thank our chairman and all the committee that make this very important day possible. We always learn something and I hope everybody agrees with that. If we haven't, or we have gone away with a question, we may have missed an opportunity to get a good answer but maybe we will have a better idea of where to look to get an answer in the future. To the committee and to Sir Colin once again thank you very much for a really fascinating day.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

SIR COLIN SPEDDING, Chairman



JONATHAN SHAW, Minister for the Horse Industry

Adrienne Smythe, Showing Council

It was very encouraging to hear the Minister's support to get a change in the law. Has the Minister thought of using a Statutory Instrument to change the law on liability?

Response: The Minister pointed out that an Act of Parliament was needed to amend the Animal Act. If there was a more straight forward method to clarify the law then it would have been used, but advice from Parliamentary Counsel was that they were pursuing the best route.

Jonquil Salt, FEI Para-Equestrian Group

Would want to include the Para Olympic Team in his best wishes for the Olympics?

Response: When I referred to Olympians, I included all athletes, whether Para-Olympic or Olympic.

Cary de Silva, Harper Adams

With reference to the attempt to change the Animals Act, is the industry back to square one, following the failure of the Private Members Bill or are we worse off than we were in terms of parliamentary procedure? In other words will completely new issues be given preference over something that has already been raised?

Response: In terms of the Government's commitment to change, that is still there. The opportunity arose thanks to Steven Crabb winning a high up position in the Private Members ballot. It arises again later in the year and it may be possible to secure new support to take a Bill forward. The lesson though has been learnt that it is not enough to rely on the good will of MPs to turn up at the vote. That doesn't mean to say MPs don't care. There must be much more lobbying beforehand. MPs are in Westminster from Monday – Thursday and Fridays are very valuable time for constituency issues, so in order to persuade MPs to give this up and to be at a vote needs a degree of persuasion to get them to understand the concerns of their constituents. You must lobby individually for support. There is a belief that a change would have positive results. We are certainly not in a worse position, it remains the same.

Liz Falkingham, Editor, Farmers Guardian

Regarding cost sharing and disease responsibility, does the Minister view the arrival of African Horse Sickness as inevitable? If so, is there a contingency plan in place for when it does arrive and are you planning vaccine research if it does arrive?

Response: There was an All Party Parliamentary Group for the Horse meeting the evening prior to the Forum. This had reported on a working group on AHS that was in place involving the industry and DEFRA. Industry and government were working together to work out what needs to be done. In terms of research, I would envisage a body that was cost-sharing and have some of the responsibility and decision making process to determine where we do invest in vaccine research. Currently £400m per year is spent on disease prevention.

The EU is also discussing having its own set of responsibilities and cost sharing.

Government would continue to work with the industry, consulting to get the balance of responsibility and cost sharing. If the cost is shared and the decision making process is shared then there is more commitment to it working.

Tim Morris, BHA

The information gathered in NED could be invaluable in helping disease prevention. The Minister had mentioned that in terms of disease surveillance and control, NED would only be as good as the information going in. With devolved administrations and EU legislation, rather than asking what laws are going to be passed to make them put data in, let's look at it more positively and ask what incentives are being considered to keep it up to date to help with the challenges of disease prevention.

Response: The issue is the EU passported horses that aren't obliged to be UK overstamped. I would like us to work together to develop a strategy to ensure that the information is correct. The Minister referred to the need for a microchip after July 2009, this working in tandem would work to good effect. It is vital though to work with the industry.

Graham Suggett reiterated the point that the non-UK EU horses and ponies entering the country create a problem in that there is no procedure for recording their whereabouts. Other than with these horses and ponies there is not a problem in recording data for disease surveillance and control. Legislation within the four governments is quite clear. All horses and ponies have to have a passport issued by a Passport Issuing Organisation (PIO) and those PIOs are mandated to forward his data to NED. Consequently, provided that owners notified the PIOs when a horse or pony changed hands, NED will always be up to date in terms of disease control information. He referred to a PIO in Scotland that was sacked for not doing the job properly. The law is already there and it is working. The voluntary data, required for the good of the industry, is more of an issue as not all PIOs are currently co-operating.

John Shenfield, British Hanoverian Horse Society

With regard to the regulations regarding the use of microchips, and the redefinition of keeper and his relationship to the control of passports within the establishment. There have been enormous staff cuts within the passport team at Defra. Is there going to be proper staff funding to monitor and enforce the regulations? Trading Standards are not equipped to do this and are reluctant to enforce the legislation in a proactive way and tend to react to complaints. The feeling was that there should be more enforcement and a more central role in ensuring horses have passports.

Response: The Minister agreed that the recent settlement was tight for Defra. The availability of public money is well known to all of us. We want to see the regulations being effective. In terms of the resources, he was confident that they had sufficient resources but would double check.

Andrew Finding, Chief Executive, British Equestrian Federation

He added his own tribute to the work of Graham Suggett and the Defra team. It has been an effective and useful partnership. He also paid credit to other organisations who had provided funding support where the National Equestrian Database is concerned. The first is the Worshipful Company of Saddlers who had made a huge financial contribution to the original British Horse Database. Secondly, he wanted to comment on the fact that Sport England is also providing funding to appoint and train the new directors of NED. This would ensure not only that the board of directors of NED is not only entirely competency based, but is also well trained and qualified to represent the industry in this area and support their contract with Government.

Response: Endorsed the thanks and would take Andrew's comments back regarding NED.

David Curtis, Chairman British Show Horse Association

It was very disappointing for many to hear of the failure of the Animal Acts revision. He felt that lots of work had gone in, but felt that the perception of politicians was very low at the moment. If the politicians would pay more attention to the issues that may seem insignificant to many but are very important to some then this perception would start to recede.

Response: When people are asked about politicians the response is often negative, the same as estate agents and journalists. He agreed that there was a need to ensure that confidence is restored. Often if people are asked about their own MP however they are often very positive, granting that they are active in the constituency and work hard. The view can therefore be different. The reason why the MPs didn't turn up for the vote, wasn't that they didn't care, but that there are too many competing demands on their diary. Therefore it is important to bring it to their attention – this is not the job of the government whips on a private members day – that is the job of the campaign and the supporters thereof. You will know if you contacted your own MP or indeed if they turned up. It is hugely disappointing, let's make sure that it doesn't happen again.

David Buckton, SEIB

It was disappointing for the change to the Animals Act not to have gone through, but said that claims had been successfully defended so clarity is starting to emerge. On disease prevention with regards AHS, much of the cost sharing would be with insurance companies and asked whether a member of the insurance industry was sitting on the committee. Was any indication of when licensing of livery yards would be introduced to the Animal Welfare Act?

Response: We would like to see legislation on Livery Yards. It would require a private member to take this forward. Departments do have a number of slots but he hopes that the Animal Welfare Act would have improvements. It is early days yet, but the RSPCA are saying that things have improved.

On the issue of disease prevention and cost sharing, a consultation is currently being conducted and closes on 15th April. He asked that contributions be made from a cross section of people.

GRAHAM SUGGETT, Director of Equine Development BEF

Heather Brown, Arab Horse Society

Is it the intention to provide extended pedigree for horses rather than just the Dam and Sire on NED.

Response: Only Sire and dam information is required to be inputted by PIOs. NED then constructs extended pedigrees from this information. Currently four-generation pedigrees can be obtained for many horses and ponies. Where this is not available it is because PIOs have not supplied NED with the information. Some of the information on NED is available free, other information is charged for. The options are limitless.

Charlotte White

Will there be the facility to add to NED, your own information about horses recorded , or indeed to change existing information?

Response: There is a facility to add information about your own horse provided you pass the test to prove it is your horse. It will not be possible to alter information provided by PIOs and Competition and Evaluation bodies. If the data is wrong, the correct procedure is to go back to the Data Providers and ask them to make the change.

ALF-EKCBERT FÜSSEL, Deputy Head of Unit European Commission DG SANCO/D1

Celia Clarke, SPSS

We have 2 problems in the UK. Firstly there is a large number of horses with registration papers from studbooks but then a lot of ID-only PIOs gave ID-only (production and breeding) passports in addition to the original papers. I contend that if they had registrations from studbooks then the ID-only passports were issued in error because the UELN could be calculated from the original studbook number but apparently the second passports can't be rescinded, even though they were issued in error.

Secondly, there are a large number of auctions of horses without passports, which are then when sold issued with ID-only passports on the day so that the animal can enter the food chain. They haven't had the 6 month proof that they are free from medication but they enter the food chain.

Response: Any horse born is considered to be for breeding or production. It is the owner's decision to register and subscribe to a breeding organisation or not. At the moment of issuing the passport there must be a trace left on the horse, so that when he decides to breed, the organisation will know to upgrade the passport and put in a pedigree, but it is clear that there is no new or second passport. When horses (after 1 July 2000) have been moved to an auction without passport this is illegal. They had a worse situation where they moved to another Member State, but couldn't be moved back. In the past the passport has always been linked to the movement, now the passport is needed because a horse is born. In some States, all horses were stationary, so had no passport, hence the change to make it necessary whether moved or not. It is better to upgrade a passport rather than have a new or 2nd one issued. Previously, a passport was needed to move a horse, now it is needed from birth.

Unknown Contributor

If an ID-only passport has been issued and there is a need to change to a breeding organisation, who puts the new pages in? When the person goes to the breeding organisation, does the responsibility change to the studbook rather than the previous PIO?

Response: Yes. It could be possible that a passport for an imported horse could not be adapted to their needs. In that case they may invalidate the previous one and issue a new one to replace it.

Pat Harris, Waltham

For information, the Danish Government has, this year, passed a law that regulates on how horses should be kept, in terms of stable size, feeding etc.

Is there a law pertaining to what happens to the passport when a horse dies that links back to databases?

Response: Yes, this already exists. The authorities recognised that there is sometimes a technical problem in sending back large numbers of passports issued by many different issuing bodies. The message is that the passport should be sent to one contact point per country who then distributes the information to the responsible organisation according to the UELN. Some request that passports be returned, but in reality this never happens. We took reality into account when writing the legislation. The keeper is always responsible. If the official vet is present then he is responsible, or the competent authority responsible for the disposal of fallen stock – they are also responsible that the passport is invalidated or later to retrieve the chip.

TIM WATSON, Chairman Scottish Equestrian Association

Barbara Coates

Congratulations to the SEA for overcoming the problems they have faced.

Wendy Edgar, British Miniature Horse Society.

Most envious of the National Equestrian Centre and asked how it was got off the ground and how was it financed?

Response: Based at Oatridge College and funded on a matched funding basis through Sports Scotland. It hasn't been without difficulties, but got £450 000 from government.

Phillipa Frances from Ofsted

Is there any firm evidence of the effect on participation that their work may have had?

Response: They are about to embark on work to develop this information on the numbers and level of participation. Whilst the government recognises the size; significant funding agents want proof.

Unknown Contributor.

We have heard much doom and gloom about the state of riding schools. Have you any knowledge on the state of riding schools which are fundamental to propagating interest in equestrianism in Scotland and whether the work of the SEA has had any impact in supporting the growth and development of riding schools and whether any lessons can be learnt?

Response: This is a moral dilemma, where the young people start out. Apart from funding projects in individual riding schools and with the ABRS, they haven't been able to make a major impact. The bigger issue is money – in H&H there was an advertisement from a premier equestrian college for a chief instructor paying only £20-25k per annum. There is something wrong when they are only willing to pay such a low level. This is a sad state

Muriel Colquhoun, SEA added that they were planning to lobby the government about ensuring riding schools are fit for purpose. There is a benefit from the UK Coaching certificate for riding schools and it will ensure a qualification is in place together with licensing which ensures the environment is appropriate. This will ensure that people are equipped to offer a riding experience to new riders that will encourage them back. Within the UKCC, SEA will make a major impact with the riding schools and it will be a quality experience that the new rider will have. Things are looking good and things will get better.

LINDA WHETSTONE, Chairman BEF Council

Doug Smith, RDA

Commended what had been said. If we don't adopt a common sense approach, then no one will ride.

Unknown Contributor:

What is the ability to challenge the H&S authorities?

Response: This was often impossible. The authorities are in a strong position as most people will not challenge. It is mostly ourselves who put the problems in place through groups themselves demanding more regulation.

Helen Brown, Miniature Horse Society

One of the big problems with H&S is that anything to do with horses is inherently risky. And yet H&S regulation try to take the risk out of the sport.

Response: I agree in part. It is dangerous to do anything. It isn't just with horses, everything has a danger about it. Responsibility for our own actions is the answer.

PETER WHITEHEAD, MO BEF World Class performance

Dr Alf Eckbert Füssel

What precautions are you taking to deal with the threat of Japanese Encephalitis for both humans and horses?

Response: None- he has been advised that they don't have to worry for humans. Riders will be advised how to avoid mosquito bites.

JOHN McEWEN, Chairman FEI Veterinary Advisory Group

Dr Alf Eckbert Füssel

What precautions are you taking to deal with the threat of Japanese Encephalitis for both humans and horses?

Response: The case with horses is more complicated. The Hong Kong Jockey Club recommends vaccinating horses, as they do on a regular basis as they have occasional cases. Vaccine is difficult to obtain but they did manage to procure some for the horses at the test event. Vaccine supplies are being held in Switzerland. When he asked for a list of horses that may be going to the games he got a list of 83 horses and he needs to get a license for the vaccination of each of them.

SORAYA MORSCHER, Eqvalan Duo Equine Thesis of the Year winner

Philippa Francis, OFSTED

Is there any evidence that red bag reoccurred in the same mares?

Response: This had been looked at but there was no proof.

In identifying the sample, were there any issues of reliability?

Response: Care was taken with the validity. The layout of the reports didn't change over 13 years and there was always more than one attendant present at any time. If the form was not completed correctly then it was omitted.

Were any recommendations made to take forward?

Response: Particular attention should be given to red bag deliveries and any foaling complications.

David Dugdale, BEVA.

It would appear that the length of foaling stayed the same with age. Did first foaling mares take longer?

Response: There was no relationship between age and whether the foal was the mare's first. It actually looked like the opposite, with older mares taking longer, and get lazier. They rely more on the foaling attendants to do the job for them.

A small breeder.

I check that all foals receive an enema, rather than just colt foals and the speaker confirmed this. What incidence of colic occurred in the foals or mares?

Response: There were no records kept on the foaling reports, as they only record immediate foaling parameters. Hence the recommendation to look further at the foals after the birth.

Rosemary Philipson Stow.

Most of my mares foal in the field. I have always noticed that filly foals seem more active. Is there any scientific reason for this?

Response: No reason could be given. Perhaps it is down to the filly being the stronger of the sexes.

Richard Matson. Twemlows Hall Stud

I am fascinated by the presentation, especially the number of redbag deliveries. Is it exceptional to have on one stud 1 in 16 (6%) redbag deliveries? He had never himself seen one.

Response: The ones that are reported are often hospital referrals so much of the evidence is anecdotal. Often mares are said to have slipped their foal, but in fact they are redbag deliveries. It is suspected that many early deliveries are often redbag, so the number may in fact be higher. In some years it was 13% but the average overall was 6%. As the mares got older the incidence increased.

HRH The Princess Royal

Were the mares foaled every year?

Response: Many did foal every year. There was no trend that a mare had repeated red bag instances, but there was a higher incidence.

Were there any conclusions about external factors that may influence the number of red bag foalings?

Response: The data that was used gave no direct connection with any external factors but it couldn't be ruled out. Another study did attribute increases to external factors, but wasn't specific.

DEBBIE GOODWIN, Lecturer in Applied Animal Behaviour, University of Southampton

Miles Williamson Noble

I was delighted to hear a balanced view. Have results like this been in the general public forum or just in the scientific press? I issue a plea to the consumer magazine present to represent the view put forward.

Response: She hopes that those present might attend the next ISES conference of the group that take place in Dublin which is open to the end user.

John McEwen, BEF

BEF uses the pliance system under saddles in their training together with a device for biomechanical assessment and thinks it is brilliant. There is a need to be aware that this is a complicated area. They had picked up rider injuries creating problems for the horse's back and picked up issues of horse movement and this was becoming an important part of training. How much does she think that the issues of physical movement of the rider and horses to stimuli responses can be divided?

Response: The speaker felt that this will be possible in due course at some stage in the future, and if she gets funding will research this further.

Graham Cory, BHS

Very interested when talking about cognitive ability. There is the suggestion that horses don't understand things such as trust, leadership and respect. Can you extrapolate from this that horses don't recognise kindness or can't reciprocate affection? When horses come up to us is it only because he wants to be fed?

Response: These are very difficult questions, at the moment they are only scratching the surface of an understanding of horse's cognitive ability. But we have to start somewhere. Historically in terms of welfare assessment they have looked at what is happening when horse's welfare is being compromised. More recently have started asking questions about pleasurable states and how you measure those. They are only at the beginning of answering the questions posed. Just because at the moment we don't have evidence that horses are capable of dealing with complicated cognitive concepts doesn't mean they can't, it just means we haven't got the methods right or haven't asked the questions in the right way.

Julie Robinson, Thoroughbred Rehabilitation Centre.

Natural horsemanship and conventional horsemanship are one and the same. I train and call myself a conventional trainer but feels that I use methods espoused by natural horsemanship. Many of those arriving to loan a horse call themselves natural horsemen and she dreads them arriving. She feels that it is a commercial business, and is sold to those who may just want to ride a bit better. She found the talk very interesting.

PAT HARRIS, Director of Science Mars Horsecare UK Ltd, Equine Studies Group, Waltham

Susie Kemp, New Forest Pony Bred Society.

Regarding the carriers of strangles, do they carry for life?

Response: Her understanding was that this was for life.

HRH The Princess Royal said that one of her mares was a carrier, but had been flushed out so was apparently no more. There is no way of checking however.

Abi Butcher, Horse & Hound

Strangles affects so many but is not a notifiable disease. Are there any plans to keep a register of outbreaks? H&H always has problems in identifying outbreaks.

Response: The Animal Health Trust does undertake disease surveillance so are informed about outbreaks.

David Dugdale, BEVA added that BEVA, in collaboration with DEFRA, are publishing quarterly reports recording the number of reported cases of strangles but are dependant on goodwill to identify the spread of the disease. It is a far from perfect scheme but it is a start to document how much of the diseases is in the country.

Abi Butcher acknowledged the problem and said that it should be up to the vet involved.

PAUL JEPSON, Chief Executive The Horse Trust

Unknown Contributor.

Is it a case of there definitely being no movement in the case of an outbreak of African Horse Sickness?

Response: There will be restricted zones fanning out, with the level of restriction dependant on the closeness of the outbreak.

Unknown Contributor.

Is the risk high enough to take more care using fly sprays etc.?

Response: Yes, good practice.

Lesley Barwise Munroe, BEVA.

What is the timescale for the development of a vaccine for horses?

Response: The new style vaccine is at least 6 months away. It is being developed and trialled in France by Merial but it is a long way from production. There are 9 serotypes of AHS which complicates the situation.

Unknown Contributor.

If there are control zones, is it necessary to know of all the holdings, perhaps through registration or licenses for premises with horses in?

Response: This highlights a fundamental problem as there is no knowledge of what is where. But if there was an outbreak then the 10 mile zone would be catch all and all places would be visited.

Andrew Finding, BEF.

NED holds owner location information. Does he think that there should also be a record of the keeper's details, on a voluntary basis?

Response: This would be a good idea but the problem is all the back street ponies as these are never going to be reached regardless or regulation.

Unknown Contributor.

Questioned the point on compensation and insurance in the case of a AHS outbreak. FMD affected so many. Within the working party, is compensation being looked at?

Response: A horse valued at millions being slaughtered compulsorily would not receive any insurance cover. With a horse of that value as a suspect case the temptation could be to let it die and then claim the insurance. This is exactly what we don't want to happen. On a positive note, the insurance industry has expressed an interest in being involved in the working party. They had invited underwriters to join the working party to thrash out a sensible solution.

Dr Alf Eckbert Füssel

As AHS is a notifiable disease, the EU has provisions for compensation of slaughtered animals.

Response: This had been broached with the Minister at the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Horse, who had said that they were complying with EU provisions and the compensation would be £1.

Ray Campbell, Scottish SPCA.

Commented that in NZ insecticide is sprayed at port of entries to reduce the risk of diseases entering the country. Could flowers from Africa not undergo a similar treatment?

Response: They do, but it is not necessarily effective.

Karen Morse, Donkey Breed Society.

Commented that if donkeys are carriers of AHS, why does the carrier not die? Donkeys had a bad press for carrying lung worm and passing to horses. The Society has worked hard to try and get over this and is worried that AHS will cause the same problem.

Response: The carrier doesn't die but donkeys do not succumb to the disease as horses do.

[Transcription by Claire Williams BETA]

A BRIEF HISTORY

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The late Mr Arthur George MBE, former Secretary of the Welsh Agriculture Society and a member of the Welsh Agricultural Equine Association, was very concerned that those in the Horse World did not appear to act in concert. He, therefore, invited Professor Colin Spedding and Graham Suggett to meet with him on the Welsh Stand at the 1989 Royal Show to discuss what might be done.

As a result, during 1989/90, representatives of a number of organisations (especially the Welsh Agricultural Equine Association, the Association of British Riding Schools and the National Farmers' Union) met to discuss ways in which the horse and pony industry could "speak with one voice" when that was needed and appropriate. The outcome was a proposal to establish a National Equine Coordinating Council (NECC) and as a first step a Seminar was organised at the NFU headquarters, Knightsbridge (on 10th October 1990) to discuss issues of immediate importance and to float the idea of a NECC. The concept was well received and development work commenced, only to founder over the issue of funding. Whilst being disappointed those who had been members of the small organising committee believed that the concept of the Forum should be maintained as it had had such a good reception. Thus was born the National Equine Forum with an organising committee, formed from a nucleus of those who had pioneered the original concept, with Professor Colin Spedding at the helm as Chairman, and the secretaryship funded by the Association of British Riding Schools through the generosity of the then Chairman, Mrs Pauline Harris.

The organising committee is a freestanding body with no other remit than to run this national event. All the members of the Committee are unpaid volunteers and only exceptionally are essential and travelling expenses paid. The format of the Forum evolved as a low cost operation due to the fact that no-one wanted yet another competing body, or the cost of running it.

The first Forum, held in 1993, could not, of course, assume that it would be annual, but it was so well received that a decision was made to run it annually, if possible. The possibility became fact due to generous sponsorship and speakers giving of their time without payment which has made it possible to operate without any charge to participants.

The organising committee has been encouraged by the appropriate Minister in MAFF opening the Forum (Nicholas Soames in 1993 and 1994; Angela Browning in 1995 and 1996; Lord Donoughue in 1998 and Baroness Hayman in 1999 and 2000 (with only the FMD outbreak preventing her from taking part in 2001), Elliot Morley (standing in for Alun Michael) in 2002; Alun Michael in 2003, 2004 and 2005, Jim Knight in 2006, Barry Gardiner in 2007 and Jonathan Shaw in 2008. The Forum has also been greatly honoured by the presence of HRH The Princess Royal, who has contributed her ideas as part of the programme, in 1996, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008.

Each year the programme is determined by topical issues with ample opportunity being afforded for questions, contributions and discussion from the floor. The main purpose, however, remains as being an opportunity for the equine industry to speak with one voice, when that is appropriate, and to serve as a sounding board for others to float ideas and proposals.

The Committee only exists to organise each Forum, not to follow up whatever may emerge at the meeting. Where such follow-up action is needed, we try to identify an existing body as the appropriate channel. Examples of initiatives which were given a first public hearing at the Forum include: The National Equine Database (NED); the British Equestrian Federation Researching Equines Database (BEFRED); The Grooms Association; Eqvalan Duo Equine Thesis of the Year Competition. In addition various Strategies and Codes of Practice have been publicly launched at the Forum.

The Forum is not a threat to any other body and does not seek to usurp their functions. It provides opportunities that can be taken up when participants want or need them.

These opportunities are appreciated by the 190, or so, people who attend by invitation each year but many breed societies, for example, are never represented and, indeed, do not respond to letters. This is a pity and, whilst no-one is obliged to participate, we are very anxious that the members of these societies do actually know about the Forum, so that at least they have the choice and can be represented by their Chairman and Chief Executive Officer.

We became embarrassed by the fact that we could not fit into the Royal Veterinary College all those who wanted to attend. Therefore, in 2006 we moved to the Royal Society where we can accommodate all who wish to attend, including those involved in relevant trades.

CURRENT and PREVIOUS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Name	Period Served		Position Held		
	From	To		From	To
Colin Spedding CBE. Professor Sir*	1992		Chairman	1992	
Pauline Harris	1992	2004	Joint Secretary	1992	1994
J Arthur George MBE *	1992	1996	Joint Secretary	1992	1994
Edward Bonner-Maurice. Major	1992	1996			
Peter V Clarke	1992				
Pat Harris. Professor	1992				
Richard T Matson	1992		Vice Chairman	1993	
Bob Phillips	1992	2000			
R H Graham Suggett OBE JP DL. Prof *	1992		Convenor	1998	
Cenydd Thomas	1992	1999			
Dinah Thomas	1992	1999			
Sue Viner	1992	1996			
K Gordon Wesley. Lt.Col	1994		Hon. Secretary	1994	1997
			Hon Treasurer	2000	
Brian Kavanagh	1994	1995			
Rosemary Philipson-Stow	1994				
Antony Wakeham MBE	1994				
Michael Overton	1996	2002			
Pippa Francis	1997	2003	Hon. Secretary	1998	2003
Rad Thomas *	1997	1999			
S Miles D Williamson-Noble. Air Cdr	1997				
Michael A Clayton	1999	2003			
John Tulloch	1999	2001			
Nigel Davenport	2001	2002			
Andrew Finding	2001				
Harry Greenway. Dr	2002				
Sarah Shepherd	2002				
John Smales. Brigadier	2002				
Ailsa Chambers	2003	2006	Hon. Secretary	2003	2006
Kirstin Alford	2004	2004			
Laura Stewart	2006		Hon. Secretary		
Len Bigley	2006				
Graham Cory	2006				
Paul Jepson	2008				

* members of the 1990 working party

PREVIOUS TOPICS AND SPEAKERS

Year	Topic	Speaker	
1990 Fore- runner	Chairman	Colin Spedding CBE, Professor	1
	Farm Diversification	David Naish, President National Farmers Union	1
	Should the Horse be Classified as an Agricultural Animal?	Graham Suggett JP	1
	The Horse in Europe	Belgian speaker	1
1993	Chairman	Colin Spedding CBE, Professor	2
	Opening	Nicholas Soames MP, The Hon. Parliamentary Secretary MAFF	1
	Horse and Pony Taxation Committee	Adam Butler PC DL, Rt. Hon, Sir	1
	The British Horse Foundation	Tonie Gibson Jane Kidd	1 1
	The Joint National Horse Education and Training Council	Graham Suggett, JP	2
	National Welfare Council	Eric Collier	1
	Health and Safety in Reference to Horses	Gordon Wesley, Lt Col	1
	Equine Research Needs and Problems	Geoffrey Lane	1
	Panel Chairman	Graham Suggett JP	2
	Planning and Rating	Rad Thomas	1
	Set-Aside	Geoffrey Fairfoull	1
	Embryo Transfer	Gary England	1
	Panel Chairman	Richard Matson	1
	Prefixes	P Campbell	1
	AI	Martin Boyle	1
1994	Chairman	Colin Spedding, Professor Sir	3
	Opening	Nicholas Soames, The Hon. Parliamentary Secretary MAFF	2
	Horse and Pony Taxation Committee	Adam Butler PC DL, Rt. Hon, Sir	2
	The Joint National Horse Education and Training Council	Graham Suggett OBE JP	3
	Marketing Horses	Richard Matson	2
	The Question of Health and Safety in the Industry	Judy Lyons	1
	EVA	Andrew Higgins, Dr	1
	Harness Racing	Jeremy Houghton-Brown	1
	The British Horse Database	Roy Bird MBE	1
	Horsewatch	Martin Taggart	1
	Horse Slaughtering on the Continent	George Stephens OBE, Colonel	1
1995	Chairman	Colin Spedding, Professor Sir	4
	Opening	Angela Browning MP. Parliamentary Secretary MAFF	1
	Horse and Pony Taxation	Adam Butler PC DL, Rt. Hon, Sir	3

	Committee		
	Place of the Trade in the Horse Industry, with particular reverence to safety	Antony Wakeham	1
	Atlanta 1996	David Marlin, Dr	1
	Set Aside with reference to Horses	Tony Pexton	1
	Equine Veterinary Research Needs	Stephen May MRCVS, Professor	1
		David Marlin, Dr	2
		James Wood MRCVS, Dr	1
1996	Chairman	Colin Spedding, Professor Sir	5
	Opening	Angela Browning MP. Parliamentary Secretary MAFF	2
	In attendance	HRH The Princess Royal KG GCVO QSO	-
	Horse and Pony Taxation Committee	Adam Butler PC DL, Rt. Hon, Sir	4
	The Arrow Project and the 2000 Programme	Tim Eastwood, Col	1
	Grass Sickness	David L Doxey MRCVS, Dr	1
	National Riding Week	Antony Wakeham	2
	The Role of MAFF	Alistair Cruikshank, Under Secretary MAFF	1
	Atlanta 1996	David Marlin, Dr	3
	Equine Veterinary Research Needs	Stephen May MRCVS, Professor	2
		David Marlin, Dr	4
		Colin Roberts, Dr	1
1997	Chairman	Colin Spedding, Professor Sir	6
	Horse and Pony Taxation Committee	Tim Eastwood, Col	2
	MAFF Progress Report	Brian Dickinson	1
	The New Code of Practice for Equine Charities	Nigel Davenport, Major	1
		John F Sharples OBE, Lt Col	1
	Riding School Proprietors Professional View	Duncan Brown	1
	BETA National Equestrian Survey 1996	David Corbett	1
	Developments in Equestrian Education	Tony Fox OBE	1
	Adventure Activities Legislation	Dinah Thomas	1
	Strategy to encourage the Breeding of the Competition Horse of the Future	Jenny Loriston-Clarke MBE	1
		W (Twink) R Allen MRCVS, Professor	1
		Robert Warden	1
		Elaine Straker	1
	Equine Veterinary Research Needs	Stephen May MRCVS, Professor	2
	Post Atlanta 1996	David Marlin, Dr	5
	Funding for Equine Research	Libby Archer	1
	Problem of Equine Sarcoids	Derek Knottenbelt MRCVS, Dr	1
1998	Chairman	Colin Spedding, Professor Sir	7
	Opening	The Rt. Hon. Lord Donoughue of Ashton. Parliamentary Secretary MAFF	1
	MAFF Up-date	Brian Dickinson	2
	Horse and Pony Taxation Committee	The Lord Cope of Berkley PC	1
	Student Equine Research Database	Graham Suggett OBE JP DL, Professor	4
	British Equestrian Federation	John Tulloch	1

	Impact of a Ban on Hunting	Bill Andrews	1
	Are Para-professionals a Threat to Animal Welfare?	Sue Dyson MRCVS, Dr	1
	British Performance Test, National Stallion Association	Lady Victoria von Wachter	1
	British Horse Society Developments	Michael A Clayton	1
	The Incidence and Management of Equine Laminitis	Elaine Campbell	1
	Equine Veterinary Research Needs	Stephen May MRCVS, Professor	3
	Feedstuffs	Teresa Holland	1
	Position on Bute	Sue Dyson MRCVS, Dr	2
1999	Chairman	Colin Spedding, Professor Sir	8
	Opening	The Rt. Hon. Lord Donoughue of Ashton. Minister for Food and the Farming Industry	2
	In attendance	HRH The Princess Royal KG GCVO QSO	-
	MAFF Up-date	Brian Dickinson	3
	Horse and Pony Taxation Committee	The Lord Cope of Berkley PC	2
	World Undergraduate Equine Research Database	Graham Suggett OBE JP DL, Professor	5
	National Riding Festival	Jane Holderness-Roddam LVO	1
	Where have all the good grooms gone?	Peter V Clarke	1
	The New Certificate in Horsemanship	Tony Fox OBE	2
	The College and University Role	Elizabeth Warr, Dr	1
	Eqvalan Thesis of the Year	Karen Pearson	1
	ABRS Jeffress Scholarship Trust	Gordon Wesley, Lt Col	2
	A Breeding Strategy for the British Sport Horse Industry	Mike Ducker, Dr	1
	Equine Veterinary Research Needs	Stephen May MRCVS, Professor	4
	Equine Physiotherapy, Past Present, Future	Amanda Sutton	1
	Equine Medicines and the European Union	Richard Jones MRCVS	1
	Closing Remarks	HRH The Princess Royal KG KT GCVO QSO	1
2000	Chairman	Colin Spedding, Professor Sir	9
	Opening	The Baroness Hayman. Minister of State (Lords) MAFF	1
	In attendance	HRH The Princess Royal KG GCVO QSO	-
	MAFF Up-date	Brian Dickinson and Panel	4
	World Undergraduate Equine Research Database	Graham Suggett OBE JP DL, Professor	6
	Jeep National Riding Festival	Steve Gray	1
	British Equestrian Federation	John Tulloch	2
	British Horse Industry Confederation	Michael A Clayton	2
	Horse and Pony Taxation Committee	James Gray MP	1
	Principles of Good Staff Management	Desi Dillingham	1

	Strengths and Weaknesses of Staff Management	Jane Robinson	1
	Staff Retention on the Racing Industry	L J Richard Nash	1
	The Cost of Equine Colic Surgery	Elizabeth Barrett	1
	Importance of Foot Balance	Chris Colles MRCVS, Dr	1
	Diagnostic Imaging – Where are we now and where are we going?	Stephen May MRCVS, Professor	5
	BETA Feed Supplement Code of Practice	Teresa Hollands	1
	Veterinary Medicine Legislation	Michael Rutter MRCVS, Dr	1
	Equine Carcase Disposal	Peter Webber MRCVS, Dr	1
	Access	Stephanie Wheeler	1
	Rider Safety	John Lloyd Parry MD	1
2001	Chairman	Colin Spedding, Professor Sir	10
	Opening	The Baroness Hayman. The Baroness Hayman. Minister of State (Lords) MAFF (Unable to attend due to emergency Cabinet Meeting re: FMD)	-
	In attendance	HRH The Princess Royal KG KT GCVO QSO	-
	MAFF Report and Response to Questions	Andrew Perrins	1
	Horse and Pony Taxation Committee	James Gray MP (Did not turn up)	-
	Horse Registration	Michael A Clayton	3
	Ragwort	Derek Knottenbelt MRCVS, Dr	2
	Success in Competitions	Philip Billington	1
	The Sydney Olympics – Lessons Learnt	Matthew Straker OBE	1
	The Athens Olympiad – Role and Objectives of BEF	Andrew Finding	1
	Application of Science in Preparing Elite Horses	John C McEwen MRCVS	1
	Application of Science in Preparing Elite Riders	Michael Dooley FRCOG	1
	BEF Coaching Development Programme	Islay Auty	1
	BEF Breeding Programme	Richard Meade OBE	1
	Assessing the Fertilisation Capacity of Equine Spermatozoa	Susan E Cook	1
	Early Identification of Equine Venereal Disease	Claire Egan (FMD. Unable to attend)	-
	Impact of Injury, Disease and Dysfunction on Performance in the Athletic Horse	David Marlin, Dr	6
	Equine Tendon Injuries. Are they an inevitable consequence of athleticism or can we prevent them?	Roger K W Smith MRCVS	1
	Identifying the Problems Facing the Horse Industry	Duncan M Brown	2
2002	Chairman	Colin Spedding, Professor Sir	11

	Selective Breeding for Soundness	Nick Wingfield-Digby MRCVS	1
	Raising Sound Youngsters	David Marlin (Unable to attend through illness)	-
	No Legs – No Horse	Simon Curtis	1
	The Effect of Tungsten-carbide Stud Nails on Hoof Balance	Helen R Jacks	1
	The UK Horseracing Industry	Alan Delmonte	1
	The Rural Forum	Kay Driver	1
	Equine Passports, Disease Surveillance and Breeding Implementation Planning Team	Andrew Finding	2
	The Threat of an EU Directive to Horse Wormers	Claire Williams	1
	Fell Pony Syndrome	Derek Knottenbelt MRCVS, Dr	3
	New Forest Pony Problems	Anthony T Bradley	1
	Donkey Respiratory Problems	Nicholas J Bell	1
	Small Gene Pools	George Jackson OBE	1
	The Swedish Horse Industry	Olof Karlander	1
	A Government View	Elliot Morley MP on behalf of Rt. Hon. Alun Michael MP	1
2003	Chairman	Colin Spedding CBE, Professor Sir	12
	A Government Overview	Rt. Hon. Alun Michael MP	1
	Future Marketing and Promotion Strategies	Diana Rhodes	1
	The Temperature Effect of Powered Grinders on Equine Teeth	Lynne Uttley	1
	Care, Use and Disposal of the Ageing Horse	Derek Knottenbelt MRCVS, Dr	4
	What is exercising my mind about the Equine Industry is....	HRH The Princess Royal KG KT GCVO QSO	2
	The National Equine Database	Graham Suggett OBE JP DL, Professor	7
	A Groom for the 21 st Century	Lucy Katan	1
	West Nile Fever	Richard Newton MRCVS, Dr	1
	A Breakthrough in the Treatment of Equine Bone Disease	Henry Tremaine MRCVS	1
2004	Chairman	Colin Spedding CBE, Professor Sir	13
	An Evidenced-based Strategy for the Equine Industry	Rt. Hon. Alun Michael MP	2
	The National Equine Database	Graham Suggett OBE JP DL, Professor	8
	The British Horseracing Industry	Tristram Ricketts	1
	Foot Balance and the Farrier	Haydn Price	1
	The Effect of Different Coloured Ramp Matting on Loading Behaviour in Horses	Hannah Haskew	1
	Opening Discussion	HRH The Princess Royal KG KT GCVO QSO	3
	Strangles	Josh Slater MRCVS, Dr	1
	Up-date on Horse Welfare in Transport	David Pritchard MRCVS	1
	Code of Practice for Passport Issuing Organisations	Catherine Burdock	1
	Cloning Geldings: A Future Must for British Sport Horse Breeding	W R (Twink) Allen CBE MRCVS, Professor	2

2005	Chairman	Colin Spedding CBE, Professor Sir	14
	Government View of the Equine Industry	Rt. Hon. Alun Michael MP	3
	A Strategy for the Horse Industry	Tristram Ricketts	2
	The National Equine Database	Graham Suggett OBE JP DL, Professor	9
	Factors Affecting the Sales of TB Yearlings	Aideen Ó Dochartaigh	1
	Buying and Selling the Sport Horse	Georgina Crossman	1
	Role of the Colleges	Malcolm Wharton	1
	The 2004 Olympics and Paralympics	Will Connell	1
	BEVA Evidence-based Medicine Initiatives	Celia M Marr MRCVS	1
	The Breeders Quality Mark (BQM) Scheme	Christopher J Hewlett	1
	A Personal View	HRH The Princess Royal KG KT GCVO QSO	4
2006	Chairman	Colin Spedding CBE, Professor Sir	15
	Government View of the Equine Industry	Rt. Hon. Jim Clarke MP	1
	Strategy for the Horse Industry in England and Wales	Graham Cory	1
	Impact of the new Animal Welfare Bill	Mike Radford	1
	The 2006 National Equestrian Survey	Claire Williams	2
	Business problems facing yards and studs, a duty of care	Tony Silverman	1
	Osteoarthritis in horses and developments in knowledge	Kate Scothorne	1
	Increasing participation in sport	Jim Clarke	1
	Increasing participation in equestrian sport	Tim Hadaway	1
	Equine challenges for the 2008 and 2012 Olympic Games	Simon Clegg	1
	A personal view of the equine industry	HRH The Princess Royal KG KT GCVO QSO	5
2007	Chairman	Colin Spedding CBE, Professor Sir	16
	Government view of the opportunities for the equine industry.	Barry Gardiner MP. Minister for the Horse industry	1
	The National Equine Database	Graham Suggett OBE JP DL, Professor	10
	Strategy for the Horse Industry in England and Wales	Graham Cory	2
	Barefoot strategies	KC La Pierre RJF	1
	The farriers' view	Simon Curtis	1
	Opportunities in equestrian coaching	Colin Wilson	1
	Opportunities for those with disabilities	Ed Bracher	1
	Opportunities for 2012	Barbara Cassani CBE	1
	Opportunities for reducing stress in travelling horses	Rachel Kay	1

	Opportunities for equine tourism	Wendy Hofstee	1
	A personal view	HRH The Princess Royal KG KT GCVO QSO	6
	Equine insurance	David Buckton	1
	Animal Welfare Act 2006	Lesley Barwise-Munro	1
	BEF Researching Equines Database	Georgina Crossman	2
2008	Chairman	Colin Spedding CBE, Professor Sir	17
	Government view of the opportunities for the equine industry.	Jonathan Shaw MP. Minister for the Horse industry	1
	Launch of the National Equine Database	Graham Suggett OBE JP DL, FIBiol, Professor	11
	SANCO – The Development and Implementation of EU Equine Legislation	Alf-Eckbert Füssel DVM	1
	What Devolution has meant to Equestrianism in Scotland	Tim Watson BVM&S PhD MRCVS	1
	A Commonsense Approach to Health and Safety Legislation	Linda Whetstone	1
	The 2008 Olympics – Health and Welfare Challenges for Horses	John McEwen BVMS MRCVS	2
	The 2008 Olympics – Health and Welfare Challenges for Humans	Peter Whitehead MD	1
	An Analysis of Peri-parturient and Postnatal Events in Thoroughbreds	Soraya Morscher BSc(Hons)	1
	Natural Horsemanship – A Balanced View	Deborah Goodwin BSc PhD FLS	1
	Strangles – An Up-date	Josh Slater MRCVS	2
	Exotic Disease Threat to the UK	Paul Jepson BVetMed MRCVS PhD, Brigadier	1
	A personal view	HRH The Princess Royal KG KT GCVO QSO	7

The Fore-runner meeting was held in Agriculture House, Knightsbridge after which all meetings up to and including 2005 were held at the Royal Veterinary College, Camden with the exception of that in 1997 which, due to refurbishment, was held in the Saddler's Hall. Currently the venue for the NEF is The Royal Society, Carlton House Terrace.

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