

**Proceedings of the 20<sup>th</sup>**

# **NATIONAL EQUINE FORUM**

**Thursday 8th March 2012**

**The Institution of Mechanical Engineers**

**1 Birdcage Walk**

**Westminster**

**London**

**In partnership with the British Equestrian Federation**



## **PASSPORTS AND THE NATIONAL EQUINE DATABASE**

### **Nick Meakin, Chairman National Equine Database**

The National Equine Database Ltd controls and operates the database of all equines passported in the UK and imported from outside the EU.

Co-ordinating data from over 80 passport issuing organisations, information is passed to UK government (Defra) to facilitate compliance with relevant EU legislation.

NED have also established a public facing facility providing information and support to horse owners, buyers, sellers, breeders, welfare organisations the police and other authorities interested in the development, care and welfare of the UK herd.

NED is actively involved in the development of an EU wide data exchange technology that will, in time, expand the capabilities of the database to make it EU wide in its scope.

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## **PROTECTION OF NATIVE BREEDS AGAINST OVERBREEDING**

### **Tim Brigstocke MBE, Past Chairman Rare Breeds Survival Trust**

The UK is the envy of many other countries for the number and variety of native pony breeds that we have and are valued as part of our heritage. The Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST) was established in 1973 and since then there has been no loss of breed. The Trust facilitates and encourages the conservation, keeping and understanding of native livestock breeds at risk both for their intrinsic value and for their significant contribution to wider sustainability. Each year a Watchlist is produced listing the breeds which are most at risk. A National Gene Bank has been created from all the Watchlist breeds and this semen collection can be used to save a breed from extinction should live animal numbers fall to an unsustainable level due to disease or any other event. RBST only works with registered ponies. The Equine Watchlist information is used by the Horserace Betting Levy Board for their annual grants to native breeds.

This presentation will focus on native pony breeds which are usually the Mountain & Moorland (M&M) breeds. The majority of the 10 (including Eriskays) are rare breeds but only five have truly semi-feral herds of "Registered" ponies (Exmoors, New Forest and Welsh Mountain with Fells and Dartmoors to a much lesser extent).

Semi-feral populations comprise, or are a component of, a recognised native breed that has some level of human input to their husbandry and management.

Registered semi-feral ponies would have stallions licensed by the relevant breed society running with the various herds and are encouraged to breed quality ponies responsibly. The M&M breeds are obviously interested in bloodlines and will do everything possible to get their members to breed

responsibly. They will also offer practical management suggestions to try to prevent unwanted foals until market conditions improve.

For some breeds agri-environmental payments particularly HLS may be responsible for the over-production of foals but could be avoided if herds of geldings, or a mare group without a stallion was used for grazing as they are still eligible for the HLS payments for conserving habitat. GAP (Grazing Advice Partnership) was conceived in 1997 as a response to increased use of grazing animals to manage land for native conservation. RBST is now the lead in a partnership which until recently involved the National Trust, Defence Estates and Natural England.

The majority of the problems of irresponsible breeding seems to come from the unregistered semi-feral ponies. This is made worse by confusion over different bodies seeking to help a particular geographical area and/or breed. For example the Dartmoor Pony Society is the official registering breed society but other organisations such as the Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust and Dartmoor Hill Pony Association, which are essentially promoting ponies running on Dartmoor, are also very active. This confusion has led to the loss of some important bloodlines. The overbreeding situation here has got so bad that a Dartmoor Pony Disposal Scheme has been established offering breeders a humane way to get rid of surplus stock.

A slightly different situation exists with the Welsh Mountain ponies on the hills which have the same bloodlines as the Welsh Section A but should probably be valued for their considerable asset as a hardy free living pony which can be used to "improve" stud bred ponies. Like on Dartmoor, the real problem here is the large number of unregistered ponies bred in Wales where almost all go

for slaughter. In 2011 it is estimated that at least 700 unregistered foals went through the various markets making as little as £2 per animal with a second one thrown in for free. Some do fetch £20 at the early sales but often foals go from sale to sale until sold. There is apparently nothing that can be done to restrict the breeding population.

The issue of hill/semi-feral foals going for slaughter for such small sums is really not a breed/breeding issue but more one on the state of hill farming in the UK. In a perfect world if breeders could be helped/encouraged to keep some foals back then there might be a market for the older colts/fillies of some breeds for some riding ponies but in reality this is unlikely. So what's to be done. In some cases contraceptive injections are being proposed along with laparoscopic ovariectomies to control breeding but both have their problems and attendant costs. For example vasectomies are being proposed rather than castration to keep established herds together.

Perhaps better identification could help in ensuring that only valuable bloodlines are used. A recent report done for the RSPCA looked at hot branding and/or microchip implantation of horses and ponies. It notes that hot branding causes significant pain and suffering and recommends that this practice should end but it also notes that identification methods such as hot branding and micro chipping can provide benefits as well as welfare harms. Freeze-marking is not suitable for semi-feral, little handled moorland ponies and indeed recommends that owners of moorland ponies should have them micro-chipped and use a collar with a permanent numerical, alphabetical or symbolic marking if they require visible identification.

This last remark is a bit simplistic. The major issue for breeds such as the Exmoor pony is to retain the original wild-type characteristics in a managed but free-living situation. The Exmoor Pony Society wants to identify the breeding of each foal born into semi-feral herds on Exmoor to try to ensure that the few remaining bloodlines now present are preserved in expanded numbers for the future.

One of the main objectives of identification is pedigree verification. Currently this is done in the field prior to returning the herd to the moor by reading the brand on the foal and matching to the mare from her brand when the foal is suckling. Reading microchips on semi-feral breeds does not work effectively and whilst branding is not ideal it is difficult to see what else can be done. Of course virtually all the M&M breeds back up parentage verification with DNA testing. It is pretty clear that if hot branding is phased out then the future for properly registered ponies will become increasingly difficult. More work is need here to create a viable and workable situation that will suit all parties.

It is clear that the situation for native pony breeds is currently very difficult. The quality of ponies is constantly improving due largely to a few committed breeders but the fact remains that overbreeding is an issue and the sector needs to accept that ponies go for meat as do other livestock. Improved ID will undoubtedly help ensuring that the best bloodlines are preserved and promoted but dealing with semi-feral animals is always going to be difficult.

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## **FUTURE ACCESS FOR RIDERS**

**Catriona Cook, BHS Regional Access Officer, Byways and Bridleways Trust Chairman**

**The Importance of Access to the Horse Industry:** the Horse Industry is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest land based industry after agriculture, bigger than forestry or horticulture, is worth £7 billion per annum, yet has no comprehensive rights of way network, or access to common land, which are its' facilities.

**Humans:** physical exercise

emotional well being

access to the natural environment

bonding with an animal

increases riding skills, giving a larger pool from which to select national teams

safety, safe riding away from traffic

**Horses:** physical exercise

fewer stable vices

a wider education than riding in confined spaces

safety, safer away from traffic

**The Every Day Rider:** riders cover all ages, and especially beneficial for children and teenagers, and the disabled.

all social backgrounds, and those that hack out come from lower social groups than car born tourists.

90% of those that hack out are female

byways and bridleways and access to commons are the facilities of the horse industry, just like swimming pools are to swimmers.

**Current Provision:** the legislation for access in Scotland and Ireland is different, and the following refers only to England and Wales.

walkers have access to 100% of the rights of way network, the right to roam on moorland, heath etc, forestry commission has been dedicated for walkers and the foreshore under coastal access.

cyclists have access to 22% of the rights of way network, plus cycleways, cycle tracks and Sustrans routes.

riders have access to 22% of the rights of way network, and to urban commons.

drivers of horses have access to 5% of the rights of way network.

**Discrimination against Equestrians:** there have been three Acts covering public access to the countryside over the last 12 years. Equestrians have been ignored and have actually lost access they currently enjoy, as a consequence of these Acts.

2000 Countryside and Rights of Way Act; gave walkers statutory access to moors, heaths and downland, with a restriction against horses. Urban commons which have equestrian access are now signed as open access land for walkers only. And all unrecorded equestrian routes to be extinguished in 2026, only 14 years away.

2004 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, this extinguished motorist's right over unclassified roads which were also recorded on the definitive map as footpaths. Most Authorities forget that equestrians have rights on roads and erect barriers to deny all but walkers.

2005 Forestry Commission woods were dedicated for walkers and not for equestrians, who often have to pay a permit.

2009 Coastal Access Act; the foreshore became "Open Access Land" with restrictions against horses.

**Road Traffic:** increasingly dangerous for equestrians, with some 11 accidents involving horses per day.

**What Is Needed and What Can Be Done:** equestrians need a comprehensive rights of way network, free at point of delivery, with a choice of routes, for every community. And their common law rights across commons acknowledged.

some areas have added miles of bridleways to the definitive map but the historical network of ancient bridleways must be properly recorded nationally, by 2026, which requires funding by the Horse Industry.

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## **THE ROLE OF ARENA SURFACES IN INCREASING OR DECREASING INJURY**

**Dr Rachel Murray MRCVS, Senior Orthopaedic Advisor Animal Health Trust**

Artificial surfaces are increasingly used for training horses for various sports. Research into the surfaces used by human athletes has shown that injury risk and performance can be affected by training and competition surfaces. Physiological adaptation to a surface can reduce injury risk in humans, and this is supported by work in dressage horses where a sand surface was associated with higher risk of lameness than other surfaces, but increased frequency of training on sand relatively reduced the risk of lameness. However, use of a single surface for training can be detrimental if peak performance is required on a different surface. Use of multiple surfaces and training types for proprioceptive conditioning can be beneficial.

Training surface characteristics that increased the likelihood of lameness in dressage horses are being patchy or uneven in normal conditions, changing to deeper or boggy in wet conditions, or to patchy or firmer in hot/dry conditions. In contrast, surfaces that remained uniform in normal and hot/dry conditions were associated with a reduced likelihood of lameness. Problems of horses tripping, slipping and/or losing balance on arenas were associated with an increased likelihood of lameness.

Various surface and arena features are associated with properties that increase risk of lameness. These include surface type, base type, arena use, ownership and size. Overall, livery yards or non-privately owned arenas and arenas with more horses using them are more likely to be associated with problems, and are at higher risk of lameness than privately owned arenas. Smaller arenas tend to become patchy and uneven, change with weather conditions and increase the risk of tripping or losing balance. Wax coated or sand/rubber surfaces tend to stay more uniform under different weather conditions while sand has a high risk of becoming uneven, patchy, changing with weather conditions or leading to horses tripping and losing balance. Woodchip as a surface carries by far the highest risk of horses slipping, is more likely to be uneven and patchy than wax coated or sand/rubber, changes with weather conditions and is also associated with losing balance.

Arena surface components can influence the properties associated with lameness. In general fine sand is better than coarse sand for preventing tripping. Large chunks or strips of rubber are more likely to be associated with tripping than small rubber chunks, while rubber on top of the surface increases the likelihood of the surface remaining uniform.

Arena design can affect the properties that increase lameness risk. Absence of arena base is associated with various detrimental arena properties related to lameness, while arena base type can also influence problems. A limestone base is preferred while a crushed concrete base is associated with slipping or tripping. Smaller arenas increase risk of negative surface properties. Maintenance of the arena surface is also important in relation to lameness. Frequency of management (levelling) of the surface and number of horses using the arena can influence the properties predisposing to lameness, with increased frequency of levelling and less horses being relatively protective.

Funding for the Animal Health Trust investigations into arena surfaces has been provided by British Dressage and UK Sport lottery funding for the British Equestrian Federation World Class Programme.

#### Further reading/References

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### **ARE EQUINE DEGREES WORTH THE PAPER THEY ARE WRITTEN ON?**

**Sue Pimbley, Independent Professional Trainer and Coach**

Are Equine degrees worth the paper they are written on?

What is a Degree?

What is “Degree worthiness“?

Do people come to Equine Degrees for the same reasons?

Do students use similar entry routes to access Degrees?

There are even Farriery and Dentistry Degrees now – What?

Can student numbers be maintained?

Well , are they worth it? Let’s discuss!

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### **LIABILITY ISSUES – COUNTS OR CONCILIATION?**

**Helen Niebuhr, Head of Equine Team Darbys Solicitors**

To follow

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## **DEVELOPING NATIONS – WHAT LESSONS FOR BEHAVIOUR CHANGE?**

**Roly Owers, Chief Executive World Horse Welfare and Petra Ingram, Chief Executive, The Brooke**

With an estimated 100 million working equines (horses, donkeys and mules) in the world today, 'horsepower' is very much alive and working in the 21st century. Through an overview of the four British charities working in the field of equine welfare in the developing world and a series of case studies, this presentation explores what we might learn from the successes these charities have had in achieving behaviour change in the developing world. Lessons learnt include the importance of understanding 'why' working equines suffer as well as what they are suffering from, and that welfare improvements can be driven successfully by empowered equine owners across the world. It is only through achieving such change that we can have any chance of improving the lives of even a small proportion of the world's working equines.

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## **BHS THESIS**

### **EQUINE OBESITY – HELPING HORSE OWNERS TO HELP THEMSELVES**

**Lisa Randle, Winner Eqvalan Duo Thesis of the Year**

Wider horse ownership, modern management methods and owner perceptions can conspire to create a situation where equine obesity is widespread. Existing research (Salonen *et al*, 2009; Stephenson *et al*, 2011; Wyse *et al*, 2008) indicates that between 30 – 54% of UK horses and ponies are either overweight or obese. Unless owner perception can be altered, then owner behaviour will continue to perpetuate an unacceptable situation. Adverse effects of equine obesity include conditions such as insulin resistance and laminitis.

66 owners were interviewed during November and December 2010 about their animal's weight, body condition, workload and management. 115 horses and ponies were condition scored (by both owner and researcher) and an estimation of live weight was obtained using a weigh tape (calibrated separately for horses and ponies). Additionally, wither height, heart girth circumference, neck length and mid-neck circumference were recorded.

Research by Carter *et al* (2009) derived ratios linking morphometric measurements to indications of excess body condition, neck crestiness and predisposition to laminitis (subject to a trigger factor). These ratios were used to analyse current data and 33% of subjects were identified as overweight or obese, 59% had cresty neck and 18% were at heightened risk of laminitis. 25% of owners allocating their horse/pony with body condition score 7 (overweight), 8 (obese) or 9 (very obese) considered them to be at the correct weight with a further 60% considering they were slightly over-weight. This suggests that owners are accepting the obese phenotype as representative of normality.

Owners are significantly more likely to ask the vet for nutritional advice if their horse has been ill, indicating that it would be beneficial if vets had sufficient knowledge to advise on nutritional issues, especially as it relates to disease.



BCS, neck crestiness and owner estimation of perceived metabolism, together with morphometric measurements could demonstrate to owners the need to manage their horse's weight. These factors could signal to both owners and professionals the need to act before the onset of clinical disease. Vets could be more proactive at routine visits such as annual vaccinations. Potentially, 'well horse' clinics could be initiated where equine vets, nutritionists, physiotherapists and dentists could work together to educate and motivate horse owners in cases where action is required. Owners need the support of equine professionals to healthily manage the horses and ponies in their care.

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## **TOPICAL SPOT: ADVANCING EQUINE SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE (AESE)**

### **Dr Georgina Crossman, Executive Coordinator, AESE**

The British Equestrian Federation (BEF) together with the British Society for Animal Science (BSAS) are proud to announce the launch of a new joint initiative: AESE. The first Research Roadshow was held on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2011 at Warwickshire College, Moreton Morrell. The second Research Roadshow will be held on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> March at Hartpury College, while the third will run on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> November at Askham Bryan College.

**Aim:** To advance scientific excellence through improved collaboration between the equine industry, research institutes, colleges and universities throughout the British Isles.

### **Objectives:**

- To provide support to those carrying out equine research;
- To provide continuing professional development to those carrying out equine research;
- To coordinate collaborative research projects across all disciplines which benefit the equine industry as well as those carrying out the research and their respective institutions;
- To assist in the dissemination of the findings and information from research throughout the industry, utilising peer reviewed journals and other appropriate mechanisms;
- To offer a link between organisations (both commercial and not-for-profit) who want research carried out and those who wish to undertake research into any area or aspect of the equine industry;
- To build a UK-wide equine research community, encompassing all.

**Background context:** During the past six or seven years several seminars and meetings have considered key issues concerning the promotion and development of research within and for the

equine sector. Representation at these meetings has included senior members of the BSAS and BEF as well as researchers from colleges, universities, research institutions and a number of commercial organisations. These discussions have resulted in the formation of AESE with the remit to support and develop research within the equine sector in the British Isles.

**How it would work:** The development of AESE will be in three stages:-

**Stage I**, the “Research Roadshow” comprises a day in which staff involved in research and research projects within participating institutions would receive requested CPD and take part in a networking opportunity. The first Research Roadshow is being held on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> December at Warwickshire College, Moreton Morrell Campus. Arrangements for two further Roadshows, to be held during 2012, are currently being made. In the morning, the Research Roadshow will focus on presentations covering core competency areas such as study design and the use of statistics. The afternoon will include a ‘tailor made programme’ based upon topics (chosen from a pre-circulated list) that had been identified as being important to that particular institution prior to the Roadshow alongside time for informal, confidential discussions between delegates and presenters. Throughout the Roadshow delegates will be able to ask questions and seek practical answers.

**Stage II** focuses upon the initiation of collaborative projects undertaken in a number of establishments around the British Isles. This will allow a large bank of data to be built up, which would benefit from a diverse geographical input, on a number of key subjects, which will be of real value to the equine sector. In addition, this would enable the establishments involved to be part of a much larger project than they would normally have the opportunity to partake in. Such projects would have standardised core protocols and methodologies developed by an expert panel of established researchers in the particular topic, and will be coordinated by AESE. If required, additional, site specific additional elements could be added by participating establishment and/or company specific questions/tasks the results of which will be confidential to the establishment of company respectively.

**Stage III** continues the professional development offered in Stage I. For staff overseeing collaborative research projects a number of workshops will be offered, focusing upon different elements of the research such as protocols and methodological design (including scientific and social science); data analysis (examining quantitative and qualitative data); and the publication of findings (both scientific and industry publications).

It is intended that Stages II and III would formally begin in the 2012/2013 academic year, once funding has been secured.

Feedback: Positive feedback and support for the concept has been received from various consultation events during 2011. Further opinions and comments will be sought from others as the initiative moves forward.

**Who is involved?:** The AESE Concept Board currently consists of prominent international researchers (Dr Tim Parkin: [University of Glasgow](#); Prof Josh Slater: [Royal Veterinary College](#); and Prof Colin Whittimore: [British Society of Animal Science](#)), industry representatives (from [Alltech](#) and [WALTHAM](#)) and representatives from the [British Equestrian Federation](#) (BEF) and [British Society of Animal Science](#) (BSAS).

**What are we asking in respect to costs?** Some seed funding is in place from Alltech to start Stage I, the “Research Roadshows” element of the project. The AESE Concept Board is actively seeking financial support for the initiative.

**Legacy:** The London 2012 Equestrian Legacy Plan highlights the commitment of the BEF and the industry to a holistic Long Term Equine Development and Research Programme involving the collaboration of the sport, the supporting industry and Academia. AESE will help to deliver this aspect of the Legacy.

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## WELFARE IN RACING – THE SCOTTISH EXPERIENCE

### Stuart Earley, Chief Executive Scottish SPCA

1. Think of a Number
2. Serious Point – Power of Persuasion
3. Persuasion only works if you have a dialogue, some trust and people are prepared to listen to what other people are saying.
4. If I started this session by insulting you or telling other people how awful you are then it’s unlikely that you would want to listen to me.
5. That’s why the Scottish SPCA works with organisations like Scottish Racing and the BHA and does not take adversarial positions.
6. Taking an adversarial approach forces people into entrenched positions making it much more difficult to effect meaningful change. But taking an adversarial approach is easier – it plays to the media and achieves more column inches in PR coverage. The Scottish SPCA does not do that.

7. Overall the Scottish SPCA deals with over 200,000 calls per annum and attends 40,000 incidents and the one reassuring thing amongst all our investigations is that the percentage of incidents attributable to real malicious and intentional cruelty is less than 10%.

Lack of knowledge and understanding are the real enemies when it comes to improving animal welfare and the only way to tackle these enemies is by working with groups like Scottish Racing and the BHA and not adopting adversarial positions.

8. With Scottish Racing and the BHA we have a very open relationship. If any of us have an issue we pick up the phone and talk about it and we listen. From our part we try and understand things from racing's perspective and it helps that I have a fairly good understanding of the sport and that we have a Race horse Trainer as one of our Directors.

9. A key component of this relationship is that fragile thing called trust.

As we all know you can work years to build trust and it can be shattered in an instant.

As an animal welfare organisation almost on a weekly basis we make decisions relating trust and our various partners.

There is almost a constant temptation to go public if something is not moving fast enough or if we disagree with something. The media is always happy to promote conflict so it is an easy option, but it is also the option of last resort and is bound to impact upon trust.

Sometimes we have to say something publicly, but in those circumstances we will make it clear to the other party that unless we can come to an agreement that is the only course open to us and in these rare situations we even advise the other parties of the line we are going to take.

10. Trust can be maintained, even if you publicly have to disagree as long as hypocrisy is avoided.

11. Why does our relationship with Scottish Racing work so well?

Because like any relationship you have to work at it.

You have to really understand the issues and concerns of the other partner.

You have to take time to talk to the different people involved in different aspects of the other organisation.

You have to listen and you have to trust your partner and earn their trust.

12. You don't always achieve all your objectives overnight and sometimes you have to settle for achieving milestones on the road to your objective.

13. As an animal welfare organisation we may feel that what we believe is right and what someone else believes is wrong, but you cannot always achieve what you want overnight.

14. Sometimes you can stand by your guns and be totally inflexible because you know that you are right – or you can achieve an acceptable solution. The two are not always compatible.
15. If you can meet a group of strangers and persuade half of them to think about ..... without once mentioning ..... then we can persuade people to our way of thinking without being adversarial.

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## WHAT CONSTITUTES DOPING? - WELFARE v PERFORMANCE

### Janice Shardlow, Head of Governance & Legal, BEF

I was delighted when I was given the title of this presentation and asked to speak to you today. Much of the work that I carry out on a day to day basis in the field of anti-doping focuses on the minutiae of the system and I welcome the opportunity to stand back and review the fundamental concepts. The answers to the questions we may ask ourselves as to the types of substances that should be prohibited or the type of competition to which such a system should apply all become more straight forward if one goes back to these concepts.

At the heart of any anti-doping system, whether for humans or for horses is the concept that using certain substances in sporting competition is wrong. Their use may be wrong for 3 fundamental reasons:

1. The substance may enhance or have the potential to enhance performance.
2. The substance may represent a health risk to athletes.
3. The use of the substance may violate the “spirit of sport”.

It is no surprise that the World Anti-Doping Code, the model which anti-doping systems follow, uses these 3 elements to identify the list of prohibited substances for humans – a positive answer to any 2 of the 3 criteria will result in a substance being listed as a “prohibited substance”.

The Code puts into place a procedural system of testing and sanctioning designed to ensure in a proportionate manner that athletes are deterred from using such substances in sport, and if and when such substances are used the system is designed to detect them and impose appropriate sporting sanctions.

I do not have time to go into the detail today but I will just draw your attention to a number of the key features, namely:

- the concept of strict liability
- standard suspensions/fines
- the opportunity to mitigate.

You should also be aware that the Code applies to all Olympic sports (which of course includes our disciplines of dressage, eventing and show jumping), and that it also brings into its ambit the animals which compete in such sport. Under Article 16 such sports involving animals are required to put anti-doping rules into place which are consistent with the key provisions of the Code. The FEI has lead in

this field producing the FEI Equine Anti-Doping and Controlled Medication Regulations which build onto the Code provisions a compliant system for equines.

As we are all aware however equines are not humans. It is important to keep in mind that although equines are sentient beings and have some powers of communication, they do not have the subtle forms of communication which humans do; they do not control their destinies, but instead rely on us humans. Their welfare is in our hands. Simply to transpose a human anti-doping system may not be enough.

So where does equine welfare come into the anti-doping equation? You have already seen that one of the criteria for substances under the Code is that the substances pose a health risk. This concept is reflected in the equine prohibited list used by the FEI and the BEF as “banned substances” – substances which are so damaging to a horse that they should never be used – they have no place in the appropriate care of an equine.

But this does not go far enough to ensure fair and appropriate treatment of the equine. So over the years a concept of “controlled medication” has evolved which runs alongside that of doping in equine sport. In equine sport there are not only sanctions for doping “banned substances” but also for “controlled medication substances”. The second part of the equine prohibited list sets out what these are. It is designed to ensure that the welfare of the horse should not be harmed by the use of such substances in competition. It is however legitimate and often appropriate to use them out of competition in veterinary treatment of the horse.

Again it would not be appropriate to go into the detail at this point but key features of this system are:

- a standard level of sanctions
- guidance on detection times
- the potential to obtain a therapeutic use exemption
- a form of “fast track” system for first offenders.

One of the questions I was asked to address today is whether such systems should apply at national level competition. In the case of our FEI disciplines there is no choice as the FEI has now made this a condition of participation. For non-FEI sports such systems are not compulsory – any sport considering whether or not it is appropriate would be well advised to go back to the first principles we have looked at today and ask itself:

1. Is the use of the substance potentially performance enhancing and so unfair on other competitors?
2. Does the substance carry a health risk?
3. Could the use of such a substance be against the spirit of equestrian sport?

And, in the case of controlled medication, is some further protection required to protect the welfare of the equines involved in your sport? It would also be wise to address the long term implications should such substances be permitted, in particular on the shape of the sport itself and the competitors which take part.

In conclusion I must admit that I feel a sense of pride at what has already been achieved in this field and the emphasis that our systems give to the welfare of the horse. I believe that particular thanks go to the vets at the very heart of the development of the FEI system some of whom will be known to you and indeed may even be sitting in this room today.

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## **SARCOIDS AND HEADSHAKING**

**Professor Derek Knottenbelt OBE, Professor of Equine Internal Medicine, University of Liverpool**

Available as two separate downloadable illustrated papers at [www.bef.co.uk](http://www.bef.co.uk) on the National Equine Forum page

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## **ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE BOARD**

**Michael Seals MBE, Chairman Animal Health and Welfare Board for England**

Michael Seals outlined the role of the Board as the principal source of advice to Defra Ministers on strategic health and welfare relating to kept animals in England. He explained that the Board comprised non-executive members and senior government officials and he summarised the Board's priorities. He noted that non-executive members had been appointed as individuals and not as representatives and that each had a stakeholder portfolio. Mr Seals explained how the Board was working and noted the budgetary pressures that Defra was facing. He outlined the risks and opportunities of this new way of working and the challenges ahead.

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## **OLYMPIC and PARALYMPIC EQUINE HEALTH SECURITY**

**Professor Josh Slater MRCVS, London 2012 Clinical Lead and National Technical Official**

The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Equestrian Games will be the highest profile event in this year's equestrian calendar and will be the culmination of four years of detailed and meticulous biosecurity planning to ensure that all horses arrive, compete and return home safely and in good health. There are several unique features of London 2012 which make the disease risks quite different from all recent equestrian Olympic Games. In previous Games, virtually all horses fly long-haul to the Olympic venue. This requires a massively complex logistics exercise to coordinate the smooth arrival of horses, feed, tack, equipment, medicines and accompanying staff. The host country's health regulations require horses to be quarantined and closely monitored before they fly

and a further period of monitoring after arrival. Additional vaccination and testing may be required, depending on the country of origin. Health certificates and declarations have to be completed, importation regulations complied with and re-export requirements fulfilled before horses can return home. International air transport of horses brings its own health risks from respiratory diseases such as shipping fever (pleuropneumonia) and muscle diseases such as myopathies. There is a risk that disease might be imported with the horses or that the competition horses may contract exotic diseases present in the host country. Planning for each of these contingencies was a major feature of the preparation for the 2008 Hong Kong Equestrian Games.

London 2012 will be very different. Almost 300 horses will travel to London, 225 for the Olympic and 78 for the Paralympic Games, but almost all of these will travel from elsewhere in Europe rather than flying in from other parts of the world. In fact, only 1% will fly directly to London from outside Europe, mainly from the USA and Canada. A further 3% will fly to the UK and reside here temporarily before competing and then returning home, again mainly from the USA and Canada. The rest will begin their journey from within Europe because most elite competition horses are based in Europe as this is where many of the major FEI competitions take place. Although not requiring transcontinental air travel, coordinating the movement of these horses to London still requires an enormous and complex logistical effort. Peden Bloodstock, veteran international horse logistics experts and providers of horse transportation for major equestrian competitions worldwide for over 125 years and 65 years' experience of transporting horses by air, bring their expertise from previous Games to London 2012 and are managing all aspects of equestrian logistics including equipment, medicines and dealing with certification. The fact that almost horses are making short journeys from within Europe means that the exotic disease risk presented by the arrival of these high health horses which are very closely monitored horses and have the highest standards of preventive medicine and veterinary health care is therefore very low. Although the risk of exotic disease is very low, the impact on the Games should one of these diseases occur would be very high and has therefore required detailed contingency planning.

Health and welfare planning for London 2012 began in earnest almost four years ago and has been a joint effort by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG) veterinary team, Peden Bloodstock and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). This integrated approach to biosecurity is another unique feature of the preparation for the Games and has allowed coordinated planning for both exotic and endemic diseases. A risk based approach, taking into account the international equine health situation and working closely with Defra's epidemiology and global animal health units, identified key infectious and contagious diseases for which detailed contingency plans have been drawn up. Defra constantly monitors the world equine health situation and issues regular reports to the Games organisers allowing rapid updates to contingency and disease health screening plans. To test preparation and responses to these key exotic diseases including Equine Infectious Anaemia, African Horse Sickness, Glanders and Foot and Mouth Disease (a non-equine disease which could impact on horse movements if an outbreak occurred close to training camps or Greenwich Park), Defra held Exercise Herekles, a cross-agency table top exercise, in October 2011.

During the Games, a 35-strong LOCOG veterinary team working closely with Defra, Peden Bloodstock and the FEI, will monitor the health and welfare of the competition horses. Health screening of horses by the veterinary team will occur before they arrive at Greenwich Park at an Equine Staging



Post, located about eight miles from Greenwich, whilst the lorries transporting horses and equipment are undergoing a security check. The Equine Staging Post is a disease control point which ensures that only healthy horses are admitted to the Greenwich Park stabling. Horses with clinical signs of disease will be diverted to isolation stables located on the edge of Greenwich Park and held there until a diagnosis has been made allowing a decision about whether to admit horses to the main stabling. Diagnostic laboratories for endemic and exotic disease diagnosis are on standby round the clock to ensure rapid decision making in the event of a problem being detected at the Equine Staging Post. A network of external consultants and specialist clinical facilities will also be on standby round the clock to ensure that horses with complex problems receive the best possible care. Testing of the Equine Staging Post health screening procedures and equestrian logistics at Greenwich Park occurred during the Test Event held in July 2011.

### **Summary**

London 2012 will be very different from previous Olympic and Paralympic Games. Most horses will not be flying internationally to compete in London and the risk of exotic disease occurring is very low. Uniquely, the health and welfare preparations for 2012 involve an integrated response to exotic and endemic diseases by the Defra, LOCOG and equestrian logistics teams. Detailed planning and a dynamic, risk-based approach means that the veterinary team are ready for any eventuality and ensure that all horses arrive, compete and return home in good health.

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Full information for NEF 2012: [http://www.bef.co.uk/National\\_Equine\\_Forum](http://www.bef.co.uk/National_Equine_Forum)

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See you on 5 March 2013