

# back to basics #2

## Equine Welfare

The purpose of running a livery yard is to provide a professional and reliable housing or services to care for equines on behalf of their owners, and with that comes responsibility, sometimes on a legal basis.



### Welfare is The Priority

#### Ethical and fair treatment of equines

The basis of equine welfare is the five domains, and these should play a vital role in the services and facilities you provide the equines kept on your premises. All horses and ponies should be provided with a secure and suitable setting to allow positive experiences in their daily routine whether in the paddock, in the stable, or during exercise. All should be treated as an individual, with their specific needs understood and met. Interactions during their care and exercise should be patient, compassionate, and empathetic.



### When Things Aren't Right

#### The ability to intervene

All equines should receive basic routine care such as hoof care, dental care and parasite control. Your expectations for equine welfare should be laid out in your livery contract such as regularity of visits and appropriate care according to the services you provide. Any equine showing signs of pain, illness or disease should be isolated, if appropriate, and attended to by a vet at the earliest opportunity. But what do you do if a horse owner doesn't comply with this? Your livery contract should have a clause allowing you to intervene, at the cost of the client, if you believe a horse or pony on your yard is suffering unnecessarily, and to seek the appropriate care or treatment. First and foremost you should discuss your concerns with the horse owner, and can serve them with an Improvement Notice to remain on the yard.



### Duty of Care

#### The legislation that applies

The main legislation supporting animal welfare in England and Wales is the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). Anyone who owns or cares for an animal has a 'Duty of Care', and a responsibility to meet an animal's basic needs. Anyone who causes unnecessary suffering to an animal in their care could constitute a serious offence under the Act. Your livery clients should be confident that you have the appropriate skills and knowledge to meet the needs of their equines. All yard owners should be familiar with the DEFRA Code of Practice for Equines, and the British Equestrian Charter for the Horse. Under equine ID laws, yard owners also have a responsibility to verify the identity of equines on their premises.



### Abandonment Issues

#### Those who simply don't attend

What do you do if an owner just disappears, or doesn't attend for days on end? The Control of Horses Act 2015 allows for tighter controls on abandonment. A horse is abandoned where it is deliberately left somewhere for a sufficient amount of time to risk unnecessary suffering. This could be the case if an equine is left on your yard or premises without being attended to by the owner, and not under your care. In such cases, there may be the option to serve an abandonment notice to the owner.



### Biosecurity

#### Protecting horses on the yard

Biosecurity and protecting your yard from infectious disease is a large part of equine welfare. Basic biosecurity practices should be carried out on the yard such as cleaning procedures, parasite control, visitor protocols and new arrivals procedures, but also considerations for those moving off the yard such as for events and training.



### Further Advice

#### Support is available

If you have concerns regarding the care or welfare of equines on your premises, Redwings and World Horse Welfare offer support and advice and, if the situation requires, can assist with interventions. You can also direct your livery clients to them for guidance and support.