

VHPRC Accident & Horse Welfare Protocol April 2026

Part 1 Scope: The “Accident protocol” is communicated to all club members, judges and riding instructors. It should apply to all accidents and specifically to accidents where an injury is likely to be severe.

- Club members and participants must report all accidents, incidents or falls immediately
- **The organizer (Instructor or the event lead committee member) is the appointed First Aid Coordinator**
- In the event of an accident the **First Aid coordinator** will take the lead.
- We ask our members to follow the first aid advice. They may be told to remain still, stay on the ground or may be provided with other advice.
- If club members decide to ignore first aid advice, other club members should not help to move the injured person, if they are unable to move without assistance.
- If the member does not follow the advice given by **first aid coordinator** this will be recorded on the incident report form
- If the injured person cannot get off the floor without assistance the **first aid coordinator** will call 999.
- We shall act on 999 advice while awaiting assistance or if 999 is called if the ambulance is not deployed or a long wait time
- Club members should not help to remove safety equipment from the injured person eg: riding hat, body protector.
- In the event of a minor injury eg: sprained ankle, we can help the injured person if they are able to move without assistance.
- All incidents and accidents are recorded and reviewed to ensure correct procedures are followed.
- Club members must cooperate with accident investigations, providing statements if requested to the investigator.
- Risk assessment documents are reviewed and lessons learnt if appropriate.
- Serious accidents are investigated, reported to the British Riding Club and if applicable to the Health & Safety Executive in accordance with “The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013”.

Part 2 Scope: The “Horse Welfare protocol” is communicated to all club members, judges and riding instructors. It should apply to all activities organised by the riding club, including those open to non members.

- Anyone may raise a welfare concern – ideally this should be with the committee lead at the event. However, concerns may also be raised to other committee members if appropriate.
- The committee member should then immediately raise the concern with the instructor/judge
- The Instructor/Judge should take the lead on liaising with rider/owner
- The Instructor/Judge should make the decision and confirm if they are happy for horse/rider to continue. This decision is final and should be communicated to the owner/rider and the committee lead at the event.

Any welfare issues should always be dealt with in a professional and sensitive manner.

Committee members are encouraged to speak to the rider/owner if they have initial concerns before reporting and if they feel comfortable to have those conversations. We shall aim to explore if there is anything that we can do to support or educate if appropriate.

Terms of Reference [BRC Handbook 2026](#)

1: WELFARE OF THE HORSE It is vitally important for the future of equine sport that the welfare of the horse is always the primary consideration. The aim of BRC is to promote the improvement of riding, training of horses in the UK.

The BRC Code of Conduct for the welfare of the horse is as follows:

- British Riding Clubs expects all those involved in BRC activities to adhere to the BRC's code of conduct and to acknowledge and accept that at all times the welfare of the horse must be paramount and must never be subordinated to competitive or commercial influences.
- At all stages during the preparation and training of competition horses, welfare must take precedence over all other demands. This includes good horse management, training methods, farriery, tack and transportation.
- Horses and riders together as a combination must be capable, have relevant training and have competition experience at the level they are entered for.
- Horses and competitors must be fit, competent and in good health and condition before they are allowed to compete. This encompasses medication use, surgical procedures that threaten welfare or safety, pregnancy in mares and the misuse of aids. Horses should not be overworked, and thought should be given to the number of classes entered and the distance to be travelled when competing at all BRC events. The official steward may stop a horse from competing if there is concern over the horse's welfare.
- Events must not prejudice horse welfare. This involves paying careful attention to the competition area, ground surfaces, weather conditions, stabling and site safety.
- Every effort must be made to ensure that horses receive proper attention after they have competed and that they are treated humanely when their competition careers are over. This covers proper veterinary care, competition injuries, euthanasia and retirement.

- BRC Rules regarding the health and welfare of the horse must be adhered to not only at national championships and area competitions but also at club level.
- Every rider, coach and club official must accept responsibility to uphold the highest level of horse welfare.
- Clipped or shaven sensory hairs around the mouth, nose, eyes and inner ear are not permitted as this may reduce the horses' sensory ability. Areas of hair that must be clipped or shaven to allow veterinary treatment may be granted dispensation to compete, provided a letter from the vet is sent to BRC office before competing.
- All national championship warm-up areas must be supervised by an officially appointed Steward. At area qualifiers there should be a steward appointed to maintain standards in accordance with BRC Rules.

The onus is on any spectator, rider, coach, judge or BRC member to inform the official steward or secretary, at a club event, if they are concerned about or feel that they have witnessed rough or unfair riding or training. The matter will then be investigated and a decision made on the appropriate action to be taken.

1.1 Equine Carrying Capacity Riders should always have horse welfare at the forefront of their minds. A rider should be the appropriate size for their horse and be suitably mounted in terms of weight and height. When assessing carrying capacity, you must first determine your horse's ideal bodyweight, if a horse is overweight this doesn't mean the carrying capacity can be increased. The maximum carrying capacity of a horse should not exceed of 20% of their ideal bodyweight. In most cases a ratio of below 20% is optimal. Please note: This must include everything the horse is asked to carry including the rider themselves, tack, boots, riding hat etc. It is the rider's responsibility to conform to this rule in the interests of horse welfare. Officials may challenge riders whom they believe are over the 20% carrying capacity and riders may be prohibited from continuing to participate. BRC runs educational sessions for members on this subject see

Sport:80 “Resources” for more information. BHS has many resources that explain the reasoning behind this rule and its importance to horse welfare. For more info visit:
<https://www.bhs.org.uk/horsecare-and-welfare/health-care-management/>

1.2: Examples of Abuse Here are some examples (but not an exhaustive list) of what could be considered abuse and should be used in addition to those mentioned in rule G23 and G24:
Lameness: Riding any unsound pony/horse Tack: Incorrectly fitted tack; used outside of manufacturer’s guidelines Over-working: Riding or competing on an exhausted, lame or injured pony/horse Distress: Ignoring the obvious distress of a pony/horse, whether caused by the rider or other external factors Blood: Any sign of blood on the animal is cause for concern. If blood is seen anywhere on the horse when riding or competing in any discipline they should be stopped on site and where a vet is in attendance will be assessed by a vet to determine the cause of the bleed. At the discretion of the Official Steward following such consultation, the combination may be eliminated. Where a vet is not present, the horse should be stopped and not permitted to continue.