

**Proceedings of the 19<sup>th</sup>**

# **NATIONAL EQUINE FORUM**

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**The Royal Society**

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**In partnership with the British Equestrian Federation**



To view the full Programme for 2011

<http://www.bef.co.uk/downloads/National%20Equine%20Forum%20Programme%202011%20V3.pdf>

Information: [jan.rogers@bef.co.uk](mailto:jan.rogers@bef.co.uk)

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## **DEFRA's VIEW**

**James Paice MP**

**Minister of State for Agriculture and Food**

No summary supplied to date

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## **ALL IN THIS TOGETHER – THE WORK OF THE BHIC**

**Professor Tim Morris**

**Chair, British Horse Industry Confederation [www.bhic.co.uk](http://www.bhic.co.uk)**

The equine sector is extremely diverse. For those of us directly involved in the horse community, this is very much something to be celebrated – a clear indication of our vibrancy as a sector. The horse industry's contribution to British life is multi-faceted, encompassing some of Britain's most well-loved sporting events and leisure activities, quality bloodstock, veterinary expertise, export trade activity and all providing thousands of jobs across the UK. Not to mention the important cultural role of the horse in Britain's history and sense of national identity.

However, for an external audience looking in, the horse sector can often appear confusingly complex and fragmented. The British Horse Industry Confederation – comprising the British Equestrian Federation (BEF), British Horse Society (BHS), British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA), British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA), the Thoroughbred Breeders Association (TBA) and the British Horseracing Authority (BHA) – brings together different sections of the horse community to speak with one clear voice.

### **Who are the Horse Sector's Key Audiences?**

They include, but are not limited to: Government Ministers; Parliament; the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Defra agencies such as the new Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency; devolved institutions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; Local Government; charitable partners such as the RSPCA and SSPCA; the media (on both a local and national scale); and the general public.

### **Successes in the Last 12 Months**

The BHIC has been active on a number of fronts throughout the past year, with some notable successes. It's worth having a brief look at some of the things the BHIC has achieved to date:

1. **Responsibility and Cost Sharing (RCS)** – A comprehensive campaign that saw the initial proposals for a “horse tax” scrapped, with the help of over 12,000 people who signed the “Rethink the Horse Tax” petition. The new way forward proposed on RCS by the recent Advisory Group Report reflects the clear input that the equine sector has had throughout.
2. **Building a strong relationship with Defra** – Including an “equestrian familiarisation day” with senior civil servants at the Burghley Horse Trials, that followed on from an “racing familiarisation day” the year before.
3. **Working with Jim Paice MP and his Ministerial colleagues** – On issues such as disease prevention, horse transport, access, passports & identification, and the forthcoming 2012 Olympic Games.
4. **Combating Animal Rights Campaigning against the use of horses in leisure and competition** – making contact with every MP in the UK Parliament and receiving a firm response from Defra Ministers making it clear that the Government supports the sector’s position

### **Changing Times... And the Horse Sector’s Response**

Following the 2010 General Election, the policy landscape which surrounds the horse sector has been changing rapidly. The Government’s recent Spending Review set out the sheer scale of the challenge as Britain looks to get its public finances back on track. The impact will of course be wide ranging – but what does this mean for the horse sector?

As a result, the BHIC’s approach to engaging with Government and other audiences is shifting, particularly in the following areas:

- Responding to the Government’s localism agenda and the shift from “big government” and “big spending” to local governance, self funding. The coming years are likely to see increasing challenges, but also opportunities, opening up for the horse community to be involved in making decisions that affect animal welfare in the round.
- The “Big Society” is something that the horse sector already practices in areas such as animal welfare, with horse owners naturally taking responsibility for ensuring their animals are well looked after. Another example is disease surveillance, where self-funding through the Horse Racing Betting levy and equine charities already produces more funding than from Government.
- Focusing on engaging constructively and responsibly with Government on the key policy issues where Defra involvement can make a difference, such as international action to combat the spread of disease.
- Continuing to support a form of responsibility and cost sharing that involves the equine community – together with other relevant sectors – in policy making via a partnership board embedded within Defra (as originally called for by the sector).
- Where animal rights groups campaign for “big government” intervention (as was recently the case when Animal Aid called for a Government audit of all racehorse fatalities, when statistics are already provided by the sector) ensure that the sector speaks up about the strong “Big Society” approach being taken to equine welfare.
- Bringing the sectors own solutions to the table on a range of issue such as encouraging equine-associated tourism, livery yard licensing, protecting access for riders though local partnerships, support exports, making passports work whilst avoiding further regulation, and practicing sustainable land management.

Complementary to the BHIC's approach is the Equine Health and Welfare Strategy (EHWS). This is seen as a successful example of bringing; National and Local Government, Police, Sport, Racing, Competition, Leisure, Breeding, Welfare and others together. The EHWS is seen as a vital group to contribute to Defra's new approach to partnership.

### **The Future for the BHIC**

The future for both the EHWS and the BHIC lies in increasing the level of communication and understanding between the diverse sections of the equine community and external audiences such as Defra. The clear message the BHIC is receiving from National and local Government, including the devolved administrations, is that there will be less public money and we should take greater responsibility.

Crucial to building on the success of the BHIC to date is continuing to develop a broad partnership with local and national Government, as well as commercial, leisure and charity sectors. There will be times when we may have to say to the Government to support us to actually take Responsibility. Just as crucial will be the active and energetic participation of the sector itself. The challenge in the coming years will be for the sector – as a vibrant community – to seize the initiative in terms of finding and implementing national but also local solutions to the big issues such as horse disease and welfare.

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## **THE ORGANISATIONAL LANDSCAPE OF THE ENGLISH HORSE INDUSTRY: A CONTRAST WITH SWEDEN AND THE NETHERLANDS**

### **Dr Georgina Crossman**

This thesis contrasts the equine policy networks and organisational landscapes of the horse industry in England, Sweden and the Netherlands. In order to analyse each network the conceptual framework offered by the Marsh-Rhodes policy network typology is adopted, while the dimensions of membership, integration, resources and power are specifically considered. The origins and development of each policy network studied are analysed, along with an appraisal of their inherent characteristics. The cultivation and maintenance of consistency, communication and collaboration within a diverse policy network are examined. In addition, the influence of a diverse policy network on policy decision making is explored. The importance of relationships between key individuals within policy networks is analysed, along with the significance of the micro and macro levels of the networks. Finally, the future development of the equine policy network and horse industry in England for the benefit of interest groups and the government is considered.

Within each policy network a specific organisation which acted as the mouthpiece for interest groups within the network to the government was identified. However, the structure of each of these bodies and their mode of operation differed considerably between countries. In Sweden and the Netherlands, the connection between the equine and agricultural policy networks was shown to be significant in the development of the relationship between interest groups within the horse industry and the government. In both countries an organisation from the agricultural sector expedited the development of this relationship. The level of government intervention and financial support afforded to each horse industry varied. Significant differences in key sub-sectors of each of the policy networks studied, specifically sport and recreation, and breeding, were identified, while recent developments in the European-wide equine policy network were also examined.

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## **BEDDING: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE**

**Tim Smalley**

**Director, Bedmax**

This presentation intends to review the state of horse bedding in the UK. We will take a look at beddings and practices of the past. We will survey the beddings of today, the requirements of the owners and discuss the properties required and the materials available. We will look at the present practices employed by the British horse owner. We will discuss future practices and materials that may become available.

As the countryside becomes more structured and rules protecting the environment are formed disposal of manure requires more management. Manure is unprocessed stable waste comprising faeces and bedding. Manure is either treated as household waste or Industrial waste depending on the circumstances of the yard and the owner. Manure is disposed of either by spreading on the land, composting or burning in an incinerator. There are rules and guidelines controlling this.

Composting is the most common method of disposal and likely to stay that way. The end product is stable, useful and easily handled. It also requires least effort. It can be done on a small or large scale with little capital investment. There are a few simple rules of composting that will ensure a good finished product. Different bedding materials compost at different rates.

Incineration is carried out usually on a large scale. Small incineration requires high capital cost and high management capabilities. It is unlikely to have a place in the future.

A conclusion on the best method of disposal will be reached.

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## **HOW TO RUN A SUCCESSFUL EQUINE BUSINESS IN A RECESSION**

**Paul Bentham**

**Marketing Director Robinsons Country Leisure**

Thank you for asking me to come to speak to you today on what was originally going to be the grand and far-reaching title: "How to run a successful business in a recession". When I first heard that title, I wondered if I should presume to pontificate on such a topic.

By adding the modifier 'equine business', the subject moves away from the standard and the mainstream towards the niche, the specialist, the quirky – which is an area I'm much more familiar with!

I also feel that the very notion of an 'equine' modifier is something of theme in itself – to which I will return: The distinction, if there is one, between 'our world' and 'the rest of the world'.

I'm sure the academics amongst you would expect a well-prepared student to gain extra marks by attempting to substantiate or even challenge the premise of a question before going on to answer it.

The most problematic of all the terms in the title is the word 'recession'. Firstly, the UK is not technically in a recession, as I speak - although we're still wary of a 'double dip' taking hold. Whether or not the equine economy is in recession, nobody really knows and yet, for a "£4bn economy", it strikes me that we should know much more than we currently do. We have a variety of surveys but no real indices of performance.

Does recession put us at most at risk of belt-tightening or will our customers deny themselves everything but their horse? Are any more people taking up riding today or are many riders walking away? I really don't know. No organisation seems to be measuring these effects in any meaningful way. Whatever is being measured, could certainly be better shared.

Regrettably, there is almost no regular, independent data about the equestrian retail economy. We piece together a permanently changing hypothesis, based on our own experiences and morsels of information from trusted suppliers.

I can't claim to be too frustrated by this, as it has always been thus but I am a little envious when I see more concerted attempts to quantify the ongoing performance of other specialist markets.

I'd also question what our definition of 'successful' is these days. Significant growth is usually the simplest determinant but in the current circumstances, many would argue that profitability will do just fine. To others, it may even be just surviving in business for another year.

If this sounds unambitious, I would urge you to leaf through the Plimsoll Report on our Industry. It paints a grim picture of an industry seemingly over-populated by mediocrity and apparently tolerant of the reduced margins that accompany an over-supplied and stagnant market.

In the quest for success in any economic environment, I'd say that businesses have only three basic forces that operate on us, over which we have some control. The economist's twin favourites of Supply and Demand are there - as well as the bit in the middle, Operations.

Our Supply trade is still something of a cottage industry which remains heavily skewed towards the small operator. It seems that we are only now at the beginning of a period of consolidation that has been in effect over the last two or three decades in other, comparable, specialist markets, such as the camping and cycling markets.

In a downturn, difficulties are most keenly felt by those who are smallest or least professional - and I appreciate that those two terms do not mean the same thing.

It's important, then, that every company should tread very carefully in their dealings with any suppliers that are the most susceptible to the icy economic winds. There are too many small companies offering too many alternatives of similar products, resulting in too much undifferentiated competition and resultant commoditisation.

This magnifies the risks of suppliers' difficulties adversely affecting retailers who placed too much reliance upon them.

Whatever the economic climate, it's always good business sense to think very carefully before deciding about which suppliers to appoint and which to retain. In a recession, that process becomes even more crucial.

Your operations, literally, are everything you do and 'you' is the operative word here. It's the area over which you have the greatest control. You can have an effect on your processes simply by deciding to have an effect on them. Suppliers and customers can be influenced but very few companies would ever claim to be able to control either party.

In the good times, there is always the reassurance that growth is there to be achieved, as long as it can then be handled. Whether it's extra computing power, a new fork-lift truck or an administrative position, these are significant step-changes that accompany linear growth. You can very often go from struggling to cope without the resource in question to struggling to justify having it when it arrives. Generally, as long as the problem your new resource leaves you with is better than the alternative you've avoided, you've made the right decision.

As the economic cycle slowly turns, aspirations for the future are not as easily funded – every resource needs to be justified by the present, in case that's all you can reasonably expect. If that means the fork-lift goes back and the admin tasks need to be shared out again, that's not an admission of failure, it's just a recognition that the context has changed.

The level of demand is expected to reduce in a downturn. When demand reduces, it risks becoming outstripped by supply and so, prices must fall. You must lower your prices and in doing so, probably your margins. It's simple economics.

Well, I can't wholly say that's not true but I can say it's not the whole truth. Simple economic effects will only be solely in evidence when the world is full of simple economists and, happily, that's still not the case. The Marketing world is a much subtler and more nuanced place to live than the Economist's world. We also deal in products that are decisions of the heart more than they are of the head and with customers who have a living, breathing horse to care for rather than an asset to maintain and protect.

Yes, price competitiveness is perhaps of greater importance today but companies ignore at their peril the importance of customer service, whatever the market conditions. Reducing prices and margins is not an adequate justification for also reducing efforts to build a positive customer relationship. If all around are losing their heads in this regard, now is exactly the time to make sure you care more about your customers, if you want to see them more often.

We pay attention to the price points for each category of product we sell. It won't shock you to learn that we sold far fewer rugs over £100 last year, compared to the year before. Nor will you be astounded to hear that rugs under £50 were much, much more popular over the same period. Such effects have only to be monitored as closely as possible in order that an ongoing strategy can be formulated around them. The effects may seem fairly obvious, but with the benefit of a few specific numbers, you can be surprised to see by how much these 'obvious' effects are in evidence.

The absolute favourite tactic of retailers everywhere to stimulate demand without appearing to reduce prices is 'Bundling' and it's used everywhere: 3 for 2 offers, starter kits, family packs and software packages.

Bundling does come at a reduction in margin – the lower unit cost is what makes it attractive to the customer – but it's a means of eliciting more value more quickly. Who really needs a stock of three bottles of shampoo in their bathroom? Or, for that matter, two? We've grown used to it because as consumers, we've agreed that if we pay up front for more stuff, we get even more of it free.

I appreciate that not all businesses are too concerned with issues such as holding stock but even service sector businesses need to understand that price points are vital to continuing to attract customers who now can't justify the prices they used to pay. If the price tag is the barrier, offer reduced options that are cheaper but at the same margin, one-hour riding lessons instead of two, that sort of thing.

If you want an example of service bundling, how about that idea that was invented to keep football teams afloat in the years before sponsorship and television money – the season ticket?

Whatever the state of the economy, businesses always have to perform or eventually, they will cease to exist. Recession merely brings a heightening of this ever-present reality, a greater possibility that your company will fail. At the same time, it brings a greater possibility that your competitors will fail, which in turn presents extra possibilities that your company will succeed. We tend to think of Opportunity and threat as polar opposites but they never exist in isolation of each other.

I mentioned earlier a theme: the curious relationship between the 'horsey' and the 'non-horsey'. If we are truly to achieve success for equestrian businesses, I must take this opportunity to impress upon us all to better engage with all those in our world and become more inclusive to those from the wider world.

The sphere we inhabit is different from the wider, mainstream world and yet it is a subset of that world. In the horse, we share a key differentiating factor from the rest of the world. We believe it gives us a common reference point and a set of shared values that are distinct to the non-horsey world.

It's very reassuring to see the equine community gathering together on occasions such as this but like any community, we must acknowledge that ours has had its fair share of net-curtain-twitching and perhaps even the occasional garden-fence squabble over the years. With all that in mind, one might take the view there is less solidarity across our community than we'd like to think.

One might go further and conclude that the very notion of a single, convenient 'equine' umbrella to distance ourselves jointly and defiantly from the rest of the world seems more than a little illusory. 'Riding' is really a multifarious, mongrel construct, made up of a slew of different disciplines and, of course, the unaligned, much-maligned 'happy hackers'.

Even if the horse does define us all as an extended family, such a kinship is both a blessing and a curse. Like an island community, we very often seem to draw comfort and strength from our differences from the 'mainlanders' who "don't understand our ways" and we are often quick to highlight our differences from the mainstream.

I've heard many ridiculous statements over the years like "horsey people don't have time for the internet" or "our customers don't want that kind of service – they can get that at ASDA".

If you looked at our customer database – of over a quarter of a million people – you'd see that many of them live in normal houses in suburbs or even towns and cities. You'd know that most of them are able to use the internet and you'd conclude that when they're not around horses, they like to immerse themselves in the subversive counter-culture by visiting such places as Tesco, McDonalds, IKEA...even Primark. I would add that many of them wondered what all the fuss was about during the hunting debate and a significant proportion even believes, quite firmly, that hunting should remain banned.

It's very easy to overlook the huge number of riders and horse owners who, rather inconveniently, don't care about any of the disciplines and wouldn't recognise a British Olympic rider if they met one while out on a hack. This part of the market, our customers, our community views their horse, as an escape from the rest of the world, not as an outward expression of belonging to an artificially-constructed 'horse world' or, heaven forbid, any reason to indulge in competitive activity.

Should that really be such a surprise to us? Do we really want our community to consist solely 'the right sort' of people if it is to flourish? Can we afford to be too choosy in a recession? In fact, forget the economy. Do we dare risk turning away the very people who may even assure the future of equestrian sport itself?

I've always felt that above all else, business in general – but retail in particular – demands and thrives on brutal honesty. If too few people are visiting your shop, who or what do you blame? The weather? The economy? The Government? Suppliers? Perhaps even the stubbornly unco-operative customers themselves? There comes a point where you have to accept that by doing things differently yourself, you can improve the situation.

Honesty itself won't add a penny onto your revenue but it has a strange habit of pointing you towards the ideas that do put more money in the till.

As a marketer, it's natural, even tempting to want to segment the market in which one operates and the horse world with its myriad of different sports seems ideally suited to this.

What can be less easy to do is to gain that same level of connection with all customers at the same time, from those who would define themselves by their chosen discipline but crucially, also those whose passion is just as fulfilled by 'looking after'.

Faced with this challenge, the few elements that I've observed to be truly common across the whole of the horse world appear to be grooming, mucking out and a compulsion to support anyone who helps horses. A common denominator seems to be to do with clearing up a mess of one sort or another. It strikes me that it neatly highlights a necessary pragmatism that defines those who spend their time around the horse and it's very similar to the kind of pragmatism that seems to me to be one of the most vital factors in achieving success in any business at any time, not just an equestrian business in a recession.

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## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR EQUESTRIANISM**

### **Duncan Brown**

You are an incredible group of dedicated people who love your horses and make incredible sacrifices to pursue your hobby or profession. This passion can blind us from some of the obvious problems that we are facing. A key factor to improving your lot, is by improving your finances. But how?

A well known saying in coaching goes “Do as you have always done, and you will get what you always got!”

So if we want to move forward we need to take a hard look at where we are and how we got here if we are going to stand a realistic chance of improving our lot.

Take Skiing!

Approximately, half a million Britons go on a skiing holiday each year. Skiing in the UK is limited, yet we enjoy a healthy industry supporting the sport.

Most skiers go for one or two weeks each year. If you go on two separate holidays you are perceived as being a very keen skier. If you go more often you are seen as a fanatic.

Yet with riding you are only taken seriously if you compete regularly. Horse owners who just enjoy their horse without seeing the need to compete are described as “happy hackers”, and those who only ride once a week are almost discounted.

The others are not mentioned, let alone feature on the radar.

You only need to look at the number of specialist riding holiday companies who cater for a significant number of customers, for whom, this is their only equestrian activity of the year.

Golf is another prime example. People proudly consider themselves active Golfers, but many play once a fortnight or less.

It is vital that we look at these other activities. We need to learn from them and, where applicable, introduce these concepts to our industry.

Let us first deal with experience.

Traditionally we talk in time span. I.e. one or two years riding experience and so on.

But how meaningful is that? It is open to individual interpretation and potentially highly misleading. Surely it is far better to talk about the number of hours spent on horse back and then ascertain over what period, and under which circumstances, these hours were achieved.

To simplify the system we should consider colour coding riders by what they feel is compatible with their individual comfort zone.

It is done in Ski Resorts and on Mountain Bike trails.

It is universally accepted and understood.

If we were to apply this to riding, the colour code will look something like this.

Green \* Beginners and/or very nervous riders.

Blue \* Novice and unambitious experienced riders.

Red \* Experienced and enjoy a challenge.

Black \* Is able to compete, or has competed, at experienced affiliated level.

Double Black \* Very boastful riders totally lacking any ability to understand their own limitations.

The advantage of adopting this system is that people do not feel stigmatized.

They may well have ridden at Red standard in their youth but are now content to stay in the Blue Zone.

The riding school approval schemes could easily incorporate this system within their rider tests.

Riders would then feel able to select a colour coinciding with their comfort zone without feeling self conscious.

We should also look at how we start riders. We have a very strange way of starting people off on what can be a very demanding activity, which can on occasion prove to be extremely hazardous.

Surely, there is a better way than starting people off on a supposedly quiet horse and then gradually increasing the level of challenge. You all know that when we get on a horse sooner or later the animal will do something we wish it had not done.

It seems to make sense to equip riders with information and coping strategies from day one. This will greatly increase their chances of successfully coping with the inevitable challenges that will come their way.

Other activities make those requirements.

You can not take a short haul flight across the UK without being subjected to the inevitable demonstration of where the emergency exits are, how to put on your life jacket and how to inflate it. If you wish to take up diving or have aspirations to become a sky-diver, one has to comply with a basic set of rules. Either you meet their entry requirements or you do not get started

We have to improve on how we start riders off!

Simply start off with a basic explanation of how every horse, no matter how staid or quiet, is a flight animal. Then give them some coping strategies. I shall avoid going into detail. The purpose of this paper is not to take you through a riding lesson.

By giving them coping strategies you will greatly increase their ability to deal with the inevitable.

We should teach them the difference between safety critical issues and nuisance factors. Safety critical are issues where failure to observe basic rules can, and almost inevitably, will lead to a fall

with possible consequences. Failure to correctly tighten and adjust the girth is an obvious example. Nuisance factors are just that. These are inconveniences which the rider should be correctly able to assess and cope with.

Losing a stirrup at trot or canter is a clear example. Learning how to identify and deal with nuisance factors should form a part of every rider's early education.

They should know from day one what is expected of them when a rider falls. Also what is expected of them if they fall.

By giving them a clear strategy they tend to cope far better when the inevitable fall occurs. Especially, a first fall can be a traumatic experience. By learning what to expect and what to do they are far more likely to make some sensible decisions.

I.e. understanding that the instructor probably witnessed the fall and made some judgment as to its severity will govern whether or not they are invited to remount.

Understanding the importance of remounting if humanly possible, not necessarily, even, on to the same horse. Most importantly, if they decline, the horse will automatically be put away and no further attempts to remount them will be made.

This does require us to look at what happens during instructor training.

Instructors submitting themselves for ABRS and BHS exams are asked various questions as to what to do in the event of an accident.

However they never have to show any competence or go through practice situations. We know training works. So, why on earth do we not train instructors by taking them through practice emergency situations? There will not be many of you present here today who have not been taken through emergency Fire Drills. So if practice drills are accepted by the population at large, why not emergency drills for riding instructors?

This takes us on to the subject of what is happening within the world of the professional riding instructor

It is sobering to look at what happens to people who achieve The BHS instructors certificate, the BHSI. This is **THE** qualification to aspire to for those with long term plans for a career in equestrianism.

To get to this level, most successful candidates will have fulfilled the "**10 Year Rule**".

The British Equestrian Federation (BEF) "Long Term Athlete Development Plan" states "Research has concluded that it takes a *minimum* of 10 000 hours of practice for an individual to become expert in their chosen field. This is the most robust finding to emerge from studies with athletes and with experts from other fields such as the arts, music, mathematics and science.

10 000 hours equates to approximately 3 hours of practice per day, every day for 10 years, a calculation that has led this finding to be known as the "**10 Year Rule**"."

Having spent this amount of time and effort becoming expert in their chosen field these individuals clearly have a lot to offer the industry.

One would also hope that our industry would have the good sense to value these individuals.

If so where are they?

I quote from the H&H letter of the week of February 10<sup>th</sup> this year.

“So many degrees, but where are the Instructors?

Having moved from Essex to Somerset 10 years ago, we no longer have our own horses. On consulting the BHS Yearbook, the only riding establishments able to offer instruction above BHSAI were the colleges. A number of times we were told that only riding for beginners and gentle escorted hacking were provided.”

No industry with ambitions to grow and/or increase its revenue from the general riding public can afford to tolerate such a situation.

If you look round you find relatively few still working fulltime with horses. This situation becomes even more depressing as you look for even more mature instructors.

The problem is to a large extent due to poor income and perhaps to some extent to unrealistic expectations.

The opportunity for a professionally minded individual to acquire the normal trappings of a good job is minimal, in the horse world. There are very few jobs in equestrianism where a family minded person can provide for their nearest and dearest, get a foot on the property ladder and, plan for a pension.

This is to a large extent attributable to where our focus lies.

Those who make their living from horses are generally devoted people who believe in “the way of life” and that “being content with one’s job is more important than money”. They often make unbelievable sacrifices in order to pursue their chosen career. It is hardly surprising that, having made such sacrifices, they tend to concentrate on the things that matter to them rather than on things that will make a successful business. As a result most equestrian businesses are permanently starved of cash.

A complete change of attitude is needed if we are going to change this situation. At present the attention of the majority of people seriously interested in a career with horses is focused on competitive activity of one kind or another. If you look at the limited amount of information available, you will see that however you juggle the figures, the majority of riders do not own horses, and that many of those who do, do not compete or only do so infrequently.

**The result is that the largest and most important part of the market does not command the attention it deserves.**

None of this information is new;

In 1998 The BHS published a report by Peat Marwick McLintock entitled “

“The Economic Contribution of the British Equine Industry” which states;

“A major part of the horse Industry consists of the activities of Riding Establishments”

“they are particularly important in that they offer a “way in” to horse related activities by providing tuition and mount hire without the need for substantial outlays by the rider.

**They represent perhaps the best means by which the industry can take advantage of increased opportunities in the leisure market.”**

In 2004 DEFRA & the BHIC combined published a report by The Henley Centre entitled

“A report of research on the Horse Industry in Great Britain”

I quote from this report **“the growth in the leisure economy- on the whole suggest real growth potential for the industry, However some parts of the industry, particularly small businesses and riding schools have not developed at the pace of other sectors within the leisure economy, and there is a serious risk that they will remain in a vicious circle of decline.”**

In 2005 DEFRA and the BHIC published a “ Strategy for the Horse Industry in England and Wales” it went on to say **“ All equestrians and all parts of the horse industry , need to recognize and support the integral role of riding schools as the bedrock of the industry, in creating and maintaining mass participation. Reinforcing their role is a vital accompaniment to the other measures proposed in this chapter to help increase participation. The Henley Centre report found that riding schools are sidelined within the industry, to the detriment of social inclusion and potential sporting excellence.”**

We need to look at how to attract new riders; how to keep them interested; encourage them to become horse owners, and make the introduction to competitive sport for those who are interested, easy and pleasurable. These people have to be recruited from the same pool that all other sports and leisure activities are looking to, to maintain momentum and create growth. This is an area on which we must focus our attention.

Equestrian sports which once had the essential high profile TV coverage were one of the limited number of perceived glamorous sports accessible to the general public. This no longer holds true. Many other exciting sports, often in exotic locations, are now available to the general public. Intense competition has ensured that they get exceptional value for money and facilities are generally of a very high standard.

If you compare this to what is happening in our sector you get a very different picture.

Although facilities have improved they fall a long way behind other purpose-built facilities.

Frequently newcomers are left to the most junior instructor for their introduction to a sport which is both demanding and potentially dangerous. This situation is unlikely to change as long as the most important part of an instructor’s job is perceived as that of training the competitive rider. This is not the best way to win and retain the new recruit.

They need someone who understands limitations imposed by age or physique and, most important of all, who understands the vital contribution made by the casual rider to their financial well-being and that of their establishment.

We need to look at other sports and leisure activities and see what they do and how we can learn from them.

We need to encourage those who wish to work with horses to have realistic expectations of what working with horses is all about. The reality is that there are simply insufficient opportunities in coaching, serious competitive riders, for all those who wish to aspire to this life style.

We have a fantastic number of top coaches who enjoy a good lifestyle and assist their pupils in achieving admirable results.

However their number is small. Most other coaches/instructors are struggling to make ends meet.

This is largely due to our perception of how the coaching/training system should operate.

First and foremost is our obsession with private sessions.

Off course there are times when most riders will greatly benefit from having an experienced coach's undivided attention in dealing with a particular situation.

However this is not the best way for riders to progress. It is financially suicidal

for both the instructor and employer.

Simply put. Limiting a highly skilled individual to just taking private sessions is counter productive. It limits the coach's income, it is inefficient use of a riding facility, it does not allow for a high enough level of return to the employer.

It also tempts coaches into poor coaching practice. With trainees paying a high fee for their private session they expect attention. The trainer wishing to retain their pupil meets this demand. Usually with a constant series of advice, corrections or instructions. This leads to a culture of spoon feeding.

Many riders, once caught in this trap, are content to believe that this is what progress is all about and never get out of this comfort zone.

This is not how education is meant to work. If we compare what happens in main stream education, pupils enter at pre-school, then go on to primary school, secondary school and then higher education.

They start off with simple exercises and then, over the years, progress gradually to a situation where the lecturer sets the requirements and the student spends many hours working on their own with the lecturer, or course tutor, only intervening when the student asks for assistance or when there are obvious problems.

This is what should also happen with riding.

Riders should start with very specific instruction and then gradually progress to a point where the trainer/coach spends most of their time observing, only interjecting where required.

Of course, one still has to facilitate one to one coaching sessions as and when required, but not as a matter of course.

One should also be mindful that the BEF“Long Term Athlete Development” plan does not really deal with the many riders who just ride for fun and enjoyment.

They do not have highly competitive aspirations. Everyone professionally engaged with instruction should be mindful that a successful outcome from their efforts should be that their pupil no longer needs them.

They should be encouraged to spread their wings. Ride in different environments. In forests, on beaches, over undulating terrain. Perhaps try “Western”

They should be treated as valued customers, as opposed to treated with disdain because they only come infrequently. Some riding establishments give their customers a hard time if they find out that they have been riding elsewhere.

Imagine a restaurant you enjoy visiting giving you poor service because you have been seen eating elsewhere. Skiers love visiting different resorts. Golfers enjoy visiting different golf Courses.

Why should riding be any different?

We alienate thousands of people with the perception that to be a rider, you have to give up all normal activity and enjoy being ankle deep in horse muck.

We need to be selling the idea that with relatively few hours in the saddle you can go on an enjoyable riding break. You can still ride with your children long after they no longer wish to take part in other activities with you. It's a great way for friends to get away from it all.

These potential riders are out there ready and waiting to be recruited.

I know of very few riding establishments that could not use extra revenue. The same goes for the professional riding instructor.

Press coverage.

This is an area where significant advances can and should be made.

If you look at the present range of publications, they are almost exclusively directed at horse owners and competitive riders.

Where are the publications catering for the non owner? Why do they not have articles for them, on fantastic riding experiences?

How about great pub rides in different parts of the UK as well as around the world?

Why not feature well known personalities from other walks of life, rather than equestrian journalists?

Or, articles on how horses act as the binding force within families.

The joy of experiencing different horses and different riding styles?

I know, from my clients, that there are fantastic riding experiences out there which many people would enjoy reading about.

These journalists write about a days hunting experiences and the challenge of riding different cross country courses. It is only a tiny sideways step to include some of the above mentioned.

There is a huge market out there. If the present market can support so many publications one can only wonder about the size of the potential market not being exploited.

Why does the press not give credit to the riding school or instructor who started a top competitor on their road to success? These articles appear regularly yet never any acknowledgement is given to those vital influences.

This is really important. First of all recognition. Recognition is very important to people

in all walks of life but particularly in our field where financial rewards are so low.

It is vital within the BEF's Long Term Athlete Development Plan that potential talent is recognised and guided in the right direction.

Awareness that the importance of the entry level coach will be recognised and honoured can transform this sector. People operating successful riding centres are never mentioned. Why not? Forty years ago we had a successful monthly magazine entitled "Stable Management" It featured different |Centers and their staff around the UK and had a wide readership. Why not mention significant staff changes at major Centers. Surely it should be obvious that by ignoring this sector the equine press is limiting its own potential.

All that I am suggesting, is that we collectively can improve the lot of each and every one of us.

All that we have to do is focus on the largest most important sector of the market. That sector which contains a huge number of badly serviced customers.

So in summary a brief SWOT analysis.

SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

Strengths; An industry manned by a group of highly motivated and talented people.

Weaknesses; Too much focus on competitive activities.

Opportunities; Take advantage of increased opportunities in the leisure market.

Threats: **The biggest threat of all is that we just carry on as before.**

So before we finish please show your support for the horse world by looking at the following action points.

- Make sure you have an appointed person, within your organisation, looking at the recreational sector (it does not have to be you.)
  - Ensure that career minded people understand that their future lies with the non-competitive rider. How are we catering for them, how can we do it better?
  - Assess what active steps your organisation is taking to recruit new riders and increase the popularity of equestrianism. If you have not include it in your mission statement, why not? Review the situation regularly.
  - Meet with other organisations at least on an annual basis.
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## **NATIONAL EQUINE HEALTH SURVEYS (NEHS)**

**Josh Slater (Royal Veterinary College & the British Equine Veterinary Association) and Kerry Doyle (the Blue Cross) [jslater@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:jslater@rvc.ac.uk)**

The UK horse industry takes the health and welfare of its horse, pony, and donkey population very seriously. The Equine Health and Welfare strategy was written by the industry and identified that it was vital for the UK to review its health surveillance arrangements. Meaningful measures of disease prevalence in the national equine population are a vital prerequisite for defining health and establishing benchmarks for equine welfare and management at both individual horse and population level.

Whilst surveillance of specified exotic equine diseases (diseases not normally present in the UK) is the statutory responsibility of Defra, endemic disease surveillance lies outside Defra's remit. We therefore have effective measures in place for surveillance of diseases like Equine Infectious Anaemia ('swamp fever') and Equine Viral Arteritis and can be confident about the health status of the UK horse population with regard to specified exotic diseases. However, our state of knowledge about endemic diseases is much more restricted because there is no large-scale integrated surveillance scheme for these. The result is that only limited data on endemic equine diseases are available which makes it difficult to establish health and welfare benchmarks. The AHT/Defra/BEVA quarterly disease reports provide valuable information about infectious endemic diseases based on samples submitted to the AHT and other diagnostic laboratories. Although these reports provide an insight into certain infectious endemic diseases, there has not been, thus far, a mechanism for surveillance of non-infectious equine diseases in the UK.

The UK is not unusual in this respect. A recent survey conducted by the Federation of European Equine Veterinary Associations found that there were no large scale or coordinated endemic disease surveillance programmes operating in any of the Member States, save for a voluntary reporting scheme for veterinary practitioners in France. A comprehensive programme for collecting equine endemic disease prevalence data does not exist anywhere in Europe and there is no provision in place at all for recording non-infectious equine endemic disease. The National Equine Health Surveys (NEHS) provides, for the first time anywhere in Europe, an opportunity for collection of disease prevalence data 'from the horse's mouth' to assist the UK horse industry.

There are several possible routes for data collection about endemic diseases including equine veterinary practitioners, the equine insurance companies and diagnostic laboratories. All have a role

to play but none provide a complete picture and each have intrinsic bias because not all horses with a health problem see an equine practitioner, not all horses are insured and samples are not collected from every horse. The British Equine Veterinary Association and the Blue Cross decided that collection of data directly from owners would therefore be a valuable approach. Two different types of data collection were considered. Although detailed, veterinary practitioner-confirmed diagnoses provide the most accurate disease data, these types of surveys have limitations because they are time-consuming to complete and the amount of data is limited because of the need for a confirmed diagnosis. Syndromic surveillance data, recording simple descriptive syndromes like lameness, coughing, colic etc, is quick and easy to collect and allows large amounts of data to be collected. In 2008 and 2009 the Blue Cross successfully led pilot projects to collect carry out syndromic disease surveillance at several of the UK equine charities. The pilot projects suggested that syndromic disease surveillance is a practical and achievable data collection method with good response rates, good compliance and yields useful data. If scaled up to a national scheme, this approach would provide the quantity and quality of data required to set health and welfare benchmarks as well as providing an early warning of changes in disease patterns in the UK.

### **NEHS 2010**

NEHS 2010 was a larger scale pilot and ran for the week of 15-21<sup>st</sup> November. Using a simple on-line form taking around 5-10 minute to complete, horse owners were able to tell NEHS what their horse was doing on the day they chose to complete the survey using 22 syndrome categories. 306 sets of records for 3,120 horses were submitted. Most (85%) were from private owners the rest were competition yards, riding schools and studs. The high participation rate by private owners is very encouraging and suggests that horse owners might be highly motivated to take part in the much larger, nation-wide NEHS projects taking place in 2011 and beyond. The results of the 2010, although a pilot and hence limited, provide a fascinating insight into the sorts of data that might be generated from a full scale NEHS project. The most prevalent problem was lameness but, interestingly, foot lameness was not the most common cause of lameness. Laminitis was common but not as prevalent as previous surveys have suggested. Skin disease and wounds were extremely common, a finding that might not have been predicted from the veterinary literature. Approximately equal numbers of horses (1 in 10) were either overweight or underweight, emphasising the importance and continuing relevance of the 'right weight' message. The results from NEHS 2010 form a solid platform for larger scale NEHS campaigns in 2011.

### **NEHS 2011**

Two NEHS weeks are planned for 2011. The first will take place during 9-15<sup>th</sup> May 2011. The on-line forms are quick and easy to fill in and the ambition is to collect data from 10,000 horses. We hope that the UK horse industry, especially private horse owners, will really get behind this important initiative and take part – the more records that are submitted the more valuable the data and the outputs will be. All data is anonymous and no owner details are recorded or kept.

The benefits to the UK horse industry from having organised and comprehensive endemic disease data collection are many including better definitions of health and disease standards, benchmarking for management at individual horse and population level, underpinning evidence for equine codes of practice and for welfare inspectors and a valuable yardstick for riding school, and livery yard inspection and approval schemes.

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## **WELLBEING AND LEARNING THROUGH INTERCAITON WITH HORSES**

**Emile Faurie, Founder Emile Faurie Foundation [www.emilefauriefoundation.org.uk](http://www.emilefauriefoundation.org.uk)**

No paper supplied to date

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## **EQUITATION AND THE MEDIA**

**Andy Austin, Presenter and Commentator**

No paper supplied to date

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## **EQUESTRIAN PRINT MEDIA**

**Lucy Higginson, Editor Horse and Hound**

A couple of years ago, H&H celebrated its 125th Birthday – as Her Royal Highness will remember, having very kindly agreed to be photographed for our front cover.

But whether we, or any other magazine or newspaper will even exist in print form in another hundred years, I do not know, although I am confident that Horse & Hound will still be thriving, though perhaps not in the form it takes today.

I've been invited here today to discuss print media, but inevitably I must go beyond the print medium because any print product with staying power now offers far more than just its flagship paper or magazine.

For those not familiar with the general picture, I will spell it out: papers and magazines round the world are seeing steady – and in some cases steep - sales decline with some men's titles seeing their circulations shrink by more than a quarter each year. So:

- what is happening with newspapers and magazines?

- what will they look like in the future?
- what future does equestrian sport have within them?
- And how do we prevent equestrian sports from becoming squeezed out of mainstream print media as papers try to become ever younger and more populist in an effort to shore up declining sales?

The challenges facing print media began long before the current recession took hold. The arrival of the internet, with its free, easily available information, combined with people's shrinking attention spans and growing fascination – particularly among young men – with gadgets, had a big impact long before people started watching their money.

Take a look at what people are up to in any British train carriage and you'll see what I mean – you'll see people listening to Ipods, some playing games on their phones or 'talking' with friends via Facebook, one or two inevitably talking lengthily, inanely and loudly to friends on their mobiles, some checking out favourite websites – some watching TV shows on miniature, hand held TVs. But the good old-fashioned reader – this sort of scene - is increasingly rare.

But there's no point resisting change – successful brands embrace it. And if you do that, you can substantially increase your overall audience as this graphic, showing the sharp growth in the use of the Horse & Hound website, demonstrates.

Horse & Hound, for those who know us only by that reassuring thud on the doormat on a Thursday morning, is not now just a magazine. It is also:

- 1) a website with around 40,000 daily users with daily news stories, picture galleries, all kind of results and data services
- 2) a twice-weekly e-newsletter reaching almost 45,000 people
- 3) an equestrian trade e-newsletter service going to 1500 or so trade recipients
- 4) We've a regularly updated Facebook page with over 75,000 'friends' and
- 5) We tweet to over 7,000 people via twitter

And there are all kinds of further digital developments available to us, like digital-only versions of the magazine, read on a computer, and 'posted' at the press of a button.

The skill, of course, is finding ways to make significant money of the web, and other services that people have to come to expect are free.

As 'new media' has grown, so have the number of smaller, specialist online services and websites catering for a particular sport or discipline, often run by a one-man bands with very low overheads.

Although many of these do what some of us in the trade call 'churnalism' instead of journalism – regurgitating press releases rather than examining and interrogating stories properly, these can be popular places for people to hook up with others with similar interests and discuss issues on online forums.

The equestrian world also has a plethora of free magazines and websites provided free of charge with memberships to organisations like The British Horse Society, British Eventing and so on. I have a pile of such magazines at home, unopened, waiting to be recycled and it's a moot point to how well read these are.

The equestrian media landscape is thus very broad – and very fragmented, and at the same time it becomes increasingly hard to maintain equestrian coverage – certainly outside of racing – in the mainstream media. Football is king in the papers these days, with rugby, cricket and golf fighting over most of the remaining space in the sports pages. When I met the *Daily Telegraph's* sports editor a couple of years ago I had to tell who Britain's number one eventer was because he couldn't name him. But he's left the *Telegraph* now – to become Sports Editor for the BBC.

The spartan coverage of last autumn's World Equestrian Games from Kentucky – which were barely given lip service in the daily papers, despite phenomenal British success, though partly due to the difficult time difference and a clash with the Ryder Cup – demonstrated what we're up against. This actually resulted in a sort of 'media summit' taking place at Olympia involving media representatives, British Equestrian Federation personnel, PR professionals and others to explore the question.

Against such a landscape:

- How do we continue securing coverage for our sport, with a view to inspiring the next generation of riders?

\* And how do equestrian businesses and sponsors best communicate with the public?

Papers and magazines generally have smaller permanent staffs these days, and a greater reliance on freelancers, so placing stories and features in the mainstream press requires up to date knowledge of who is out there in the freelance world.

The industry doesn't help itself by having so few centralised services across the bodies who run our sports. Eventing, Dressage, showjumping, most the top shows and events, and even some individual riders all have different press representatives, many of whom are affable but quite junior staff, or

people who know a lot about their sports but very little about Who's who in the press or how the media works these days.

Sometimes big equestrian splashes come on the back of wider trends, and it takes press officers of some expertise to capitalise on these – or more often come about when a switched on regular freelancer spots a topical link and sells an idea to a paper.

Eventer Phoebe Buckley is one who has had lots of press recently on account of her Romany Gypsy background, fuelled in part no doubt by the success of the 'My big fat gypsy wedding' series on TV.

Here she is on the BBC website, which London's free morning paper, *Metro*, picked up on, but she's also had features written about her previously in the *Daily Telegraph*.

One easy win I believe would be to centralise PR resources across our disciplines at least, with someone really expert who properly understands the media. But there are other challenges too – it's not easy getting the press to engage with British showjumpers who are barely ever in the country, never ever come together for team training and who, frankly, have mixed attitudes towards publicity anyway.

Meanwhile, the fact that we DON'T have a centralised, highly experienced press team in equestrianism plays quite well into the hands of a magazine like H&H which garners many of our stories directly from riders, readers and industry contacts instead. It helps us to keep ahead of the game.

There's nothing like a topical human-interest story, nugget of priceless insight, or good old fashioned scoop or investigation to motivate people to keep reading your paper. Horse & Hound has found some reassuringly old-fashioned attributes are what works for us, with pieces like this really well researched news investigation into the activities of James Gray at Spindles Farm showing a marked upswing in sales.

Print journalism isn't dead – in fact it's real old fashioned journalism of a kind that is pretty much impossible to find anywhere online that persuades people to keep buying papers and magazines these days. High-calibre journalism in a really well esteemed, trusted brand is the key to success. But journalism is undoubtedly evolving innovating, embracing new technologies, and experimenting with new ideas. The wider equestrian world needs to keep closely abreast of these changes if we are to make sure that we reach the horselovers of the future.

And the stars of our sport - the riders - need to understand how the media is changing too, and make themselves more available than ever to it so equestrianism does not become eclipsed

completely outside the specialist press by the giant that is football. It is their stories, enthusiasm, elegance and enjoyment of what they do that will inspire new generations of riders to take up our sport.

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## **SECURING RARE AND VALUABLE BLOODLINES FOR THE FUTURE**

### **Tullis Matson, Director Stallion AI Services**

In the last ten years two global events have caused horses to be at significantly greater risk from disease than ever before. Valuable and rare bloodlines are at risk and taking precautionary action now will enable those genetics to be preserved for the future. Tullis Matson sets out the dangers and possible means of mitigating the consequences.

Due to global warming the mosquitoes, flies and midges which carry disease from one horse to another are moving northwards from the hotter climates of equatorial regions to the temperate climates where the greater numbers of horses are used for many purposes but increasingly for competitive purposes. The desire for improved genetics coincides with the increased risk of disease.

International competition has increased greatly in recent years resulting in horses travelling between countries and continents far more than previously and this increases the risk of taking specific diseases to countries which had not previously experienced those diseases.

Equine Viral Arteritis (EVA), Equine Infectious Anaemia (EIA), West Nile Virus (WNV) and African Horse Sickness (AHS) are the four most likely diseases to have a devastating effect on our horse population should they become endemic in this country.

EVA is a viral infection and a sexually transmitted disease. It is endemic in mainland Europe and we must fight to keep it out of the UK with complete adherence to the regulations. However its presence in this country would not seriously affect breeders other than movement restrictions and the compulsory castration of affected stallions.

EIA is spread by biting flies such as horse flies. There have been several cases in the UK in the last 12 months. The most recent was December. They are all directly related to imported horses. This cannot be passed horse to horse like a virus but is passed on by the biting flies moving from horse to horse. All horses with the disease are slaughtered.

WNV is now endemic in North America. There was a case in Spain last year. It is spread via mosquitoes so our increasingly warmer summers and after a wet period is when the conditions are most dangerous and it is most likely to spread. It is easily controlled with vaccination but has a high mortality rate of about 40%. Because humans can contract this disease DEFRA will be very proactive in the control of any outbreak.

AHS is transmitted by midges, the same midge as blue tongue disease which we had never had in this country until two years ago. 95% of horses die within two days. There is an automatic slaughter policy for all infected horses.

The individual whose horse gets AHS will be devastated but the restrictions which are likely to be for a minimum of two months are a stand still order within a circle with a 50 kilometre (or 35 mile) radius. That means no shows or events within the area and for horses residing in the area no travelling to shows and events outside the area. But consider what it will do for breeding. Should the outbreak be during the stud season there will be no mares visiting stallions within the standstill area. Frozen and chilled semen would be used extensively.

Stallions with a bank of frozen semen will be available but in a major outbreak not much else.

Who will be affected? All of us who own horses will be but the degree of risk and the extent to which people will be affected will depend upon how well our border controls are implemented and on future weather patterns.

What are we doing about it. The Rare Breeds Survival Trust have taken a lead and have long term stored semen from 41 stallions from 12 breeds. If finances allowed they would be storing semen from 25 stallions of each breed.

Sport Horse Breeding has led to considerable freezing of stallion semen in commercial semen banks like ours at Twemlows Hall where we have about 400 stallions frozen. But this has mainly been done for current breeding programmes and more needs to be stored for the long term survival of breeds and bloodlines.

In Britain at the moment we are doing nothing at present to store eggs (oocytes) from mares which is more practical than the freezing of embryos which has a low success rate and is a committed breeding. (i.e. the sire and dam are committed before freezing while with the frozen storage of oocytes and stallion semen, the planning of breeding can be carried out post thawing).

If we are to avert a tragedy in the next 20 years or so we need to prepare ourselves now. Kew Gardens store millions of plant seeds and if there is a plague or flood which wipes out certain plant species they can go to Kew and start again. With cattle there is now a huge bank of semen and many blood lines are secured whatever might happen. But in the equine world we have only done a tiny nibble at the problem but full marks to the RBST for being at the forefront of that nibble.



**CLEAN SPORT CAMPAIGN WITHIN FEI/BEF REGULATED EQUESTRIAN SPORTS**

**Keith Taylor, Chairman British Equestrian Federation**

The Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI) is the world governing body of equestrian sport, encompassing 134 National Federations of which the British Equestrian Federation (BEF) is one. The BEF is the governing body of equestrian sport within the UK with 18 Member Bodies, and therefore not only contributes to the development of global objectives of the sport but also to their delivery.

Any sport must be conducted with integrity and provide a level playing field for those who participate in it. History has shown that sports without integrity do not thrive, and indeed lose support. In the case of equestrian sport, there is also a clear need to have integrity regarding the welfare of the horse within the sport. Maintaining the integrity needed at all these levels therefore requires effective rules, systems and suitable controls. One of the measures of integrity of a sport and also of the care of the horses that participate within it is the approach taken to preventing the use of chemical substances or practices to enhance performance levels or to hide any unfitness to compete. In 2009 the FEI globally and the BEF nationally initiated the Clean Sport campaign, which focuses on maintaining integrity, through a series of differing measures.

Equestrian sport is unique amongst other sports in that it is effectively the showcase of a multibillion socio-economic industry. The equestrian industry from the grass roots upwards employs one person for every 10 horses and is currently growing by about 5% per year. The equine industry is also now a large source of diversified revenues for the rural community across Europe, and clearly so within the UK. Hence having equestrian sport with clear integrity is protecting not only the sport and the horses within it, but also secures the development of this associated economy.

Clean Sport measures fall into three distinct areas, rules and regulations that are fit for purpose, specific integrity checks such as systems to prevent inappropriate behavior, and renewed approach to ensuring professionalization throughout the whole sport. Doping and medication controls are a particular focus of the campaign. The demands and duration of competition for the various equestrian disciplines require horses of differing types and age to those of the one race on one day focused racehorse. Permission at equestrian events can be given for certain allowed treatments during the many days over which equestrian competition can take place. The system whereby such permissions are allowed and monitored has been significantly upgraded to ensure clarity and consistency.

The Clean Sport campaign aims at reducing the numbers of doping and medication cases, both deliberate AND accidental. Hence its delivery requires an associated effort in the area of communication and education.

In the UK the current focus is on producing a National System mirroring the FEI System. This is backed by education and publicity programs which will be rolled out from the 1<sup>st</sup> April and will be adopted by all British FEI Disciplines by 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2012.

Specific examples of Clean Sport measures are

### **Rules and Regulations**

- New Anti-Doping & Controlled Medication Rules, revised sanctions (including support personnel i.e. trainers, vets etc)
- New approach to a "Prohibited List" distinguishing Doping and Medication
- Permanent List Advisory Group including key stakeholders
- Annual review of the List
- Easy to understand guides for athletes

### **Integrity measures**

- Establishment of an investigating Integrity unit
- Stable Security at a much more sophisticated and effective level than at present through stewarding
- Introduction of CCTV surveillance when suitable
- Any Treatments of horses in supervised treatment areas
- Treatments only with written permission (analysis)

### **Professionalization**

- Drug Information Database with access via Smartphone Apps
- Clearer communications in all areas, with guidance where needed
- Dedicated Clean Sport website
- Training of Stewards and all veterinarians on sport specific courses
- Broad range of education Initiatives from youth to elite level

For further details see [www.feicleansport.org](http://www.feicleansport.org) and [www.bef.co.uk](http://www.bef.co.uk)




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### **HOMEOPATHY – SCIENCE OR ALCHEMY?**

**Nick Thompson BSc (Hons) Path.Sci., BVM&S, VetMFHom, MRCVS**

**W:** [www.holisticvet.co.uk](http://www.holisticvet.co.uk)

Nick Thompson qualified from Edinburgh University in 1992 with an Honours Degree in Pathological Sciences (Immunology, Molecular Biology, Virology & Parasitology) and a Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine and Surgery degree. In 1998 he became a Veterinary Member of the Faculty of Homeopathy.

He worked in mixed (equine, farm and pet animal) practice for seven years before establishing Holisticvet Ltd., his specialist practice offering homeopathy, acupuncture, nutritional and herbal medicine for horses, dogs and cats.

His talk states that Homeopathy is medicine. As such it is part Art, part Natural and part Physical Science, as reflected in the Rod of Asclepius, the serpent entwined with physician's staff; the universal symbol of medicine.

Nick will answer two simple questions:

1. Does homeopathy work?
2. Can it work for *my* horse?

To answer the first question, he will draw upon 142 Randomised Controlled Studies in human homeopathy over 59 years, treating 74 separate conditions, showing efficacy in 63 studies (44%).

He will then go on to examine evidence for homeopathy from Meta-analyses, or Metanalyses, the most respected study-type in Evidence Based Medicine.

In 1991, The BMJ published Clinical Trials of Homeopathy by J Kleijnen. Of the one hundred and five trials examined, 81 indicated positive results. The authors came to these conclusions: "Based on this evidence we would be ready to accept that homeopathy can be efficacious" and "the evidence presented in this review would probably be sufficient for establishing homeopathy as a regular treatment for certain indications".

In 1996 the European Commission commissioned the Homeopathic Medicine Research Group (HMRG), a joint group of researchers in conventional medicine and homeopathy. One hundred and eighty six controlled clinical trials were selected. 2,579 patients, found "some evidence that homeopathic treatments are more effective than placebo".

A meta-analysis by K Linde et al. published in The Lancet in 1997 included 89 placebo controlled studies of homeopathy. The overall conclusion was in favour of homeopathy.

In 2005, Shang et al. published a controversial meta-analysis comparing 110 placebo-controlled trials of homeopathy and 110 matched trials of conventional medicine. Homeopathy and conventional medicine showed a similar positive treatment effect overall. Twenty-one homeopathy trials but only 9 of the conventional medicine studies were judged 'of higher quality'. Nick will put up two graphs showing a remarkably similar comparison between the two sets of trials, strangely at odds with the negative conclusion of the paper.

He will proceed to look at the experience of patients and owners of animals using homeopathy:

In 2005, the same year, a study involving 6,500 sequential follow up consultations at the Bristol Homeopathic Hospital revealed 70% of human patients to have experienced improvements in their health. Difficult chronic problems suffered by many people all improved.

A five-hospital outcome study three years later confirmed these findings.

In animal studies:

A pilot study in the UK in 2007 showed that, according to owners, 80% of 767 animals taking part in the study improved.

And only last year, 2010, twenty-one UK homeopathic vets recorded data from their patients over a 12-month period, a total of 400 cats and 1500 dogs. By owners' assessments, a moderate or major improvement was reported overall for 63% of cats and for 68% of dogs.

'Can it work for my horse?' his second question, will be answered with examples from his daily equine practice.

Depending on time, he will give examples of equine cases from his own clinical homeopathic work in leisure and sport horses which may include seasonal chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (recurrent airway obstruction disease), urticaria (hives) and headshaking, idiopathic (of unknown origin) weight loss, chronic sinusitis causing weight loss and resolution of a chronic weeping sore (sinus) due to foreign body penetration.

He will conclude the talk with the observation that homeopathy works. It is real medicine in the real world supported by a substantial body of evidence.

As far as he knows, this is the first time Veterinary Homeopathy has been discussed at the Royal Society.

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## HOMEOPATHY – SCIENCE OR ALCHEMY?

**Simon J Baker MA VetMB PhD MRCVS**

Homeopathy *can't* work. It's pills and potions contain no active ingredients. For them to work we would have to overturn simple and inescapable facts of chemistry

Homeopathy *doesn't* work. In clinical trials, homeopathy behaves exactly as we would expect a placebo to do when researched by people with a vested interest in positive results. Small trials suggest weakly positive effects that cannot be reproduced in larger trials in which greater care is taken to remove biases, errors and random statistical flukes. Formal reviews of trials, called meta-analyses, confirm this pattern and also reveal a tendency for positive results to get published while negative results get shelved and ignored.

So, why do so many people still think it does work? People are very bad at judging causality in complicated systems like medicine. People see patterns where no patterns exist and assume that because A precedes B then A causes B even when they cannot be connected to each other. Homeopathy tells a good story and its adherents acquire an almost religious fervour in their belief in it. We should not be surprised that dull objective evidence, which contradicts such strong beliefs, tends to be ignored and rejected.

What are the implications for animal welfare? Homeopathy is non-medicine, it is an absence of

treatment. Maybe it is ethically acceptable for people to pay money for a cup of tea and a long chat with a homeopath that culminates in being sold some sugar pills, but animals cannot give their consent to this. Homeopathy also presents a peculiar threat to animal welfare because within the system *any* outcome can be justified: the patient gets better, the patient stays the same, the patient gets worse, the patient dies. Homeopathy has an 'explanation' for each outcome and is incapable of correcting itself. It is a set of excuses masquerading as medicine. Treatment of animals is legally the preserve of vets, but I would strongly suggest that vets who believe in it sufficiently to use it are in no position to judge its efficacy and this therapy should be removed from them as an option. The Swedish Veterinary Association made the decision some time ago to make homeopathy unethical to be used by vets. The RCVS should do the same.

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