

Riding Establishment Acts 1964 and 1970

A GUIDE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND THEIR INSPECTORS

Local Authorities are reminded that they are required under the Acts only to use qualified Inspectors who are on the current panel maintained by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS). A copy of this list is available from the RCVS.*

A CODE OF PRACTICE

The Inspector is appointed by the local authority from the list of RCVS Inspectors and is required by the relevant Acts 1964 and 1970 to report on the premises. It is recommended that the inspector is accompanied by the relevant environmental health officer.

Under the two acts, the Inspector is required to examine the premises and to be satisfied that the animals to be used are likely to be maintained in good health.

This is an inspection of the premises and also the operation of the establishment as a whole.

The appointed Inspector will inspect the horses and assess their apparent suitability.

The Inspector will advise the local authority on the type of activities carried out by the establishment. They can vary from a riding school, teaching people to ride to the hiring of horses to the public with or without supervision and includes beach donkeys and trekking centres.

The Inspector will advise the local authority on the suitability of the premises to carry out the functions that it claims to operate.

The Inspector will INSPECT each horse together with its saddlery and give an opinion on each animal's suitability and the condition of the saddlery in respect of the welfare of the horse and the safety of the rider.

The Inspector will also give a recommendation on the premises as a whole in respect of the issuing of a licence.

This document may be of value to riding establishments and could be sent by the local authority at the same time as notification of an impending inspection.

***The RCVS, Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 2AF**

THE GUIDANCE TO VETERINARY SURGEONS

The Code of Practice is laid out above but further guidance for the Inspector is as follows.

THE HORSES AND PONIES

- All horses and ponies on the premises may be inspected at the discretion of the Inspector. All horses that are used in the establishment for teaching, hire, demonstration purposes and escort work must be examined as must all horses 3 years old and younger.
- It is not necessary to give each horse a full examination as if one was doing an examination prior to purchase. Each horse and pony should be inspected briefly with particular care being given to the areas of the body which come into contact with the tack. The age should be assessed with reference to animals that are 3 years old and younger which must not be used and for which a register must be maintained by the owner and should be seen signed and dated by the Inspector.
- Each horse should be “trotted up” on a firm hard surface to check for signs of lameness.
- The use of equipment such as a stethoscope or ophthalmoscope is not deemed to be necessary unless a condition is suspected that requires their use for a more full and appropriate evaluation.
- All animals that are found to be injured or ill should be recorded.
- If an Inspector believes that any horse is in an unsatisfactory condition he should note on his report that it must not be used until the local authority has received a signed certificate from the establishments own veterinary surgeon that it has completely recovered.

EXAMINATION OF THE PREMISES

- Although a veterinary surgeon is not an expert on drainage, electricity, fire and so, on, he or she should properly report any obvious defects to the local authority who have experts to deal with these areas.
- The Inspector should be satisfied that the operations carried out by the riding establishment conform with current regulations.
- The examination should include not only the buildings that house the horses but also the fields and paddocks used by the establishment and any indoor and outdoor schools. In these cases particular attention should be paid to the surface of the school and its fences or boundary cladding.

ACCIDENTS

- Horse riding is considered to be the most dangerous sport. The Inspector should make sure that the proprietor and staff are aware of this fact. The Accident Record Book may be examined, signed and dated.
- Although the Inspector is not an expert on human safety he or she should feel able to advise the local authority on any weakness detected in this area.

SADDLERY AND RIDING HATS

- It is recommended that the Inspector examines each saddle and bridle on and off the horse. It is recommended that worn items should be identified and noted on the report with recommendations that they must be mended before any future use. As a rule of thumb well-kept leather saddles at a riding school should last for ten years, plastic ones for 3-5 years. Badly damaged saddlery should be condemned.
- The availability of riding hats should be ascertained and their overall appearance assessed. However, the Inspector is not equipped to detect fine cracks in the structure of the hats that may render them unserviceable and therefore should not give the impression that hats have "passed" his inspection.

SHOEING AND FOOT CARE

- The Inspector has to be satisfied that the foot care and shoeing is carried out on a regular and satisfactory basis.

GENERAL

- The intention of the original Acts was to look after the equine welfare and that must be the paramount objective of the Inspector. However, during the inspection the Inspector is a Local Authority official.
- The Inspector should recommend a course of action to the local authority. This may be to give a full licence or provisional licence or no licence.
- The Inspector may additionally recommend conditions to be applied to any licence. In such circumstances it is recommended that the Inspector should notify the authority in a covering letter as well as on the inspection form.
- If the Inspector has any doubts about what action to take in any particular situation, he/she should contact for advice the Chairman of the RCVS Riding Establishments Committee through the RCVS on 020 7222 2001.