

Minimum Safety Standards and Owner Guidance

There is an inherent risk associated with handling horses.

We, at _____, take the safety of our vets, staff and those assisting with examinations and treatments seriously. As part of this we have provided this guidance for our clients for the safety of all those involved, and to ensure that you are aware of what can be done to reduce the risks as far as reasonably practicable.

When our staff visit your premises, the following is a list of things that you can consider, provide and prepare in advance:

Background

- **Information:** Please provide as much information relating to your horse as possible.
The sort of information we will need to know would include:
 - o Age
 - o Sex
 - o Breed
 - o Any medical/exercise/dietary/environmental history
 - o Any behaviours we need to be aware of such as kicking, biting, aversion to needles, or to vets in general.
- **Responsible person present:** If you are unable to attend the visit in person, please ensure that whoever is attending in your place has this information to hand and has the authority to give consent for any procedures or medication that might be required.

Tack

- **Appropriate:** We would expect the horse to be handled in tack which is appropriate for the procedure being carried out.
- **Headcollar:** For many horses a headcollar is sufficient when carrying out a basic examination in the stable.
- **Bridles:** Some horses may require some sort of **bit** in their mouth for adequate control, for example if trotting up in an area where there are other horses or people.
- **Ridden examination:** If it is necessary for one of our staff to ride the horse, then you will need to provide the tack required to do so, ensuring stirrup irons are a suitable size for the rider.
- **Condition:** Please ensure that the tack is in good condition and fit for purpose.

Assistants

- **Experience:** If you are assisting with a procedure or holding a horse, or providing someone else to do so, please ensure that person is suitably experienced to do so.
- **Age:** Although children may normally handle the horse, often they may not be strong enough or experienced enough to control the horse during a veterinary procedure.

- **Clothing/Footwear:** The handlers should be wearing suitable clothing and footwear for the task they are assisting with.
- **Personal protective equipment (PPE):** a helmet or body protector may be advisable (owners are responsible for ensuring that any PPE meets appropriate safety standards).
- **Positioning:** The handler should normally stand on the same side as the vet.

Environment

- **Examination area:** We require a safe place to examine and/or treat the horse.
- **Fields:** If a horse is in a field with other horses, we may need to remove the horse from the field to examine it more closely without being at risk from the other horses.
- **Yards:** If the horse is being examined in a yard, it may be necessary to close gates and confine the horse in case it were to get loose. The yard should be free from bystanders (particularly children and pets), and free from other hazards.
- **Trotting up:** If it is necessary to use a public road, there needs to be clear visibility of traffic.
- **Lunging:** If we require the horse to be lunged this should be done in a confined area on a suitable, preferably non-slip, surface. The area should be free from vehicles and other hazards.
- **Radiography ('x-raying'):** It is necessary to restrict access to the area in which x-rays are being taken. People under 16 years old, and anyone who is or may be pregnant should not be allowed access to this area whilst radiography is taking place.

Restraints

- **Methods of restraint:** It may be necessary to use different methods of restraint during a procedure, depending on various risk factors which the vet must consider. These may include stocks, sedation, or use of a 'twitch'.
- **Choice of restraint:** The vet and owner must agree on any restraint before its use.

Prioritising safety

- **PPE:** There are some tasks, such as dentistry and endoscopy, where we recommend our staff routinely wear PPE.
- **Stopping a procedure:** If the vet feels that the control measures listed above are not sufficient to reduce the risks to a low enough level, they may choose to stop the procedure altogether and discuss alternative arrangements.
- **Support:** We fully support the measures and decisions our staff may take to reduce the risks to themselves and others.

Don't Break Your Vet videos

We understand that veterinary interventions can be an unusual experience for them, so below are a series of short videos created by the British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) to help acclimatise your horse to some of the procedures we may need to carry out. These can be found on YouTube by searching "[don't break your vet](#)".

Dated: