

**THE HORSE TRUST
PRESS RELEASE**

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PRINCESS ROYAL LAUNCHES NATIONAL EQUINE WELFARE PROTOCOL

The Princess Royal today (June 12 2008) launches the National Equine Welfare Protocol, which has been developed by representatives from local and national government, the Police, welfare organisations and others with an interest in equine welfare. It is applicable throughout the UK.

The Protocol sets out guidelines for how cases of equine neglect and abuse should be reported and handled, and what the relevant organisations can do to reduce the incidence of equine welfare problems.

In a foreword to the Protocol, the Princess Royal writes: "There are many agencies with varying degrees of interest and involvement in equine health and welfare. Sixty independent welfare organisations come together in the National Equine Welfare Council (NEWC), with many more organisations outside NEWC working towards similar welfare goals, often in geographically defined areas. Collectively they represent a considerable force for the good of equines. But despite this wealth of expertise and resource we have hitherto lacked the ability to coordinate and use it to maximum effect, with a recent high profile welfare case illustrating some of the challenges. This prompted an initiative to bring together representatives of the welfare sector, plus various public sector organisations, to develop a Protocol to establish how we might do things better, both to deal with incidents when they occur and, we must hope, to reduce the likelihood of them happening again. Drawing the best from such a diverse group called for a particular blend of organisational experience and diplomacy in the chairman and I am very grateful indeed that Major General Robert Gordon lent his expertise as a UN negotiator to the task.

"This Protocol sets out how, collectively and individually, the industry will act both to promote equine welfare and to respond to reported instances of neglect or abuse. This information will be widely available and will advise the public on how to report their concerns. The production of the Protocol represents the beginning of a dynamic process which has identified objectives to be pursued and developed over the

coming years. Central to this initiative are, in England and Wales, the 2006 Animal Welfare Act and, in Scotland, The Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006. These are based on the concept of a duty of care to animals, and the promotion of responsible ownership. We have an economic and social strategy for the horse industry which aims to promote the success and prosperity of what is already a £4 billion industry. On the back of that strategy we have, in England and Wales, a Health and Welfare Strategy for the horse which was launched in May 2007. This is a ten year plan to ensure that all our horses, ponies and donkeys are as healthy as possible, are treated as humanely as possible, and everyone responsible for equine health and welfare understands and fulfils their duty of care.

“This Protocol represents an integral part of that Health and Welfare strategy and I commend it to you.”

The Protocol is designed to communicate the responsibilities of those who own, keep or interact with horses to prevent cruelty and inadequate care and to address these issues effectively when they arise. It sets out the stakeholders involved and the likely welfare issues. It recognises the diversity of national and local government and non-governmental organisations involved in the prevention of equine welfare abuse, provides a framework for their effective cooperation, advises how public concerns can be communicated and sets out expectations on what can, and cannot, be done when equine abuse is observed or suspected.

The Protocol demonstrates the commitment of the organisations and agencies to work effectively and co-operatively for the improvement of equine welfare generally and the rapid and effective relief of equine suffering. It is being made widely available.

It is also intended to be a binding statement of intent for better coordination, and not a compendium of operating procedures. It is expected that the latter will be produced as a result of its publication.

The welfare signatories to the document have made seven commitments:

1. To review, within 12 months, the use of Improvement and Care Notices under the 2006 Acts with a view to assessing and, if necessary, increasing their effectiveness.
2. Without inhibiting the ability of organisations to continue to provide training in their own way and under their own names and will devise and adhere to a common core curriculum for such training, including the development of common assessments as to what may constitute neglect and abuse. The welfare organisations will, within 12 months, confer to identify and fill gaps in the provision of information, education and advice, and identify areas where advice may be conflicting.
3. Seek to communicate effectively and work sensitively and productively with people and organisations which represent the interests of all sections of the equine community with a view to promoting good equine care and husbandry.
4. Ensure the widest possible dissemination of the Protocol. In particular, they will give prominence to the information it contains on how concerns over equine welfare can be reported.
5. Recognise and endorse the competence and ability of each other organisation, as set out in this Protocol, to alleviate equine suffering and will, whenever the situation warrants, seek to act in concert with each other. By the same token, each organisation recognises that certain situations may not be improved by the saturation of uncoordinated effort. Where organisations work collaboratively they will ensure that any public statements made in respect of the case will fairly and accurately reflect the contribution of each.
6. Once legal proceedings are in train the principal prosecuting authority will lead on communications with the press. Supporting organisations will not do anything by way of press or public announcements which might prejudice the successful prosecution of the case.
7. Given that the prevention of equine suffering and neglect, and when necessary their rapid remediation, are the paramount considerations, and following on from the preceding Commitments, the parties to this agreement will meet once a year in June as a Protocol Review Group to assess the state of equine welfare in the UK. Where they identify shortcomings they will seek to agree appropriate remedial action. The meetings will be facilitated by the National Equine Welfare Council, with the costs being borne by the participating organisations.

ENDS

Issued on behalf of The Horse Trust by Woodcote Communications.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The welfare organisations which have signed up to the Protocol are: The Blue Cross, Bransby Home of Rest for Horses, British Equine Veterinary Association, The British Horseracing Authority, The British Horse Society, The Donkey Sanctuary, The Horse Trust, Horseworld, The Livestock Auctioneers Association, National Equine Welfare Council, Redwings Horse Sanctuary, The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, World Horse Welfare (the new name for the International League for the Protection of Horses).
2. The Horse Trust, based at Speen, Buckinghamshire, is the largest provider of grant funding for equine welfare in the United Kingdom. Founded in 1886, it is the oldest horse charity in the UK. The Horse Trust is committed to a programme of welfare, science and education: it funds research into equine diseases; gives grants to help build and equip equine hospitals throughout the country and works to raise awareness of the importance of cost, care and commitment to responsible horse ownership. The Horse Trust also manages The Home of Rest for Horses which, funded solely by donations and legacies, provides lifetime sanctuary for more than 100 retired working horses, ponies and donkeys.