

The
British
Horse
Society

Pony Stars

Junior Challenge Awards

Dartmoor Dazzlers

Syllabus for coaches

March 2021

Don't forget to also refer to the Activity Plans and Activity Sheets for delivery ideas and further resources



GOLDEN GROOM

GROOMING

This topic will introduce the benefits of grooming ponies and how to groom a pony safely using correct equipment.

Key points: children will be able to:

*One star challenges

- State a reason for grooming a pony
- Select and use correct brushes and equipment
- Safely groom a pony being aware of where to stand, position themselves and move around the pony
- Recognise sensitive areas on a pony and how to groom these areas
- Pick up a front foot
- Look out for cuts or wounds and know to tell an adult on the yard

Guidance for coaches

- Equipment: soft bristled body brush, hard bristled body brush (e.g. dandy brush), mane and tail comb, curry comb (plastic or rubber), hoof pick
- A full groom is not required to achieve the topic. The aim of the topic is not to get the pony completely dust free and clean – some children may be too young to do this. Instead it is about helping the coach to groom a pony, recognising brushes and awareness of where to stand and how to move around a pony when grooming. The children can be assisted by the coach at all times to hold pony and/or move pony and pick up the front feet.
- Children should be able to recognise that the hard bristled brush can be used on fleshy parts of the pony and the soft bristled brush is to be used on the face or bony areas such as legs. They will not need to know the specific names of these brushes
- Sensitive areas to recognise include the head, back, girth area, flank and legs (they do not need to know the names of these 'points' but should be able to point out where the pony may be sensitive)
- The coach can remove the headcollar to brush the face and assist the child to brush the face but brushing of the face is not required to achieve the topic

**Two star challenges

- Show off your new skills and have a tidy turnout competition with your friends. Who can get their pony the cleanest?
 - Organise a small fun competition
 - If you have quarter marks available at the yard would be a good time to discuss these and use them for their competition. You could also have another fun little game of designing their own quarter marks
- As you become more confident handling ponies you can begin to learn other grooming techniques such as wiping your pony's eyes and nose, picking out feet and applying hoof oil. There will be additional items of a grooming kit you would use. Don't forget to add these to your list you have made!
 - Identify and use correctly all items in a full grooming kit

- Use a sponge to wipe eyes and nose (you can also discuss wiping the under the dock but it's not required for this topic)
- Apply hoof oil (on outside of hoof) and discuss why it is used (also covered in hoofcare topic)
- Picking out feet (children can have assistance to pick up the foot if required)
- Discuss points of the horse during grooming (link to Anatomy 1 topic)
- Learn about other abnormalities you can look out for whilst grooming other than cuts and wounds such as lumps, bumps, heat and swelling

GOLDEN GROOM

ANATOMY 1

This topic will introduce basic anatomy and points of the horse

Key points: children will be able to:

*One star challenges

- Use the correct names for points of the horse
- Identify some major bones on the horse
- Identify some major organs on the horse

Guidance for coaches

- Children can have assistance from coach at all times to move around the horse or pony, position horse etc
- Identify the following: eyes, ears, nostrils, mane, neck, back, tail, front leg, back leg, hock, knee, fetlock, hoof, chestnut
- Children to name three major bones and show where they are on the horse, such as skull, ribs, spine, pelvis, or any bones they are familiar with. These should be bones they are already familiar with in their own body; do not require equine-specific bones at this level (for example cannon, pedal etc)
- Children to name two organs and show roughly where they are on the horse such as heart, brain or lungs or any organ they are familiar with. Do not need exact location but an awareness of the area where it's found

**Two star challenges

- Make a model of an organ you have learnt about. Your model can be made from play-doh, paper, card, sponge or anything you like! Then use your model to tell someone about its purpose and function and some other cool facts!
- All parts of your body, and your pony's body will have a special function, but what are they? Find out what is special about a pony's whiskers, or what purpose their forelock, mane and tail have.
 - Should at least cover the function of whiskers, forelock, mane and tail
- Did you know your horses and ponies can sleep standing up? How do they do this without falling over?
 - Discuss how horses can sleep standing up, which joints allow this to happen and what is it called

GOLDEN GROOM

LEADING PONIES

Develop further handling skills by leading your pony safely

Key points: children will be able to:

*One star challenges

- Approach a pony in the stable
- Put on a headcollar
- Lead a pony in and out of the stable
- Lead a pony on the yard
- Tie a pony up
- Handle a pony safely on the ground being able to move its shoulders and haunches and step backwards
- Describe the potential risks associated with handling and leading ponies and how risks can be minimised

Guidance for coaches

- Children can be assisted at all times
- Children to be aware of the risks involved when handling and leading ponies and how they can minimise risk. Things to discuss include being trodden on, barged, pushed over or kicked, rope burn, slips from handler or pony (ground conditions), hazards that may spook a pony (rubbish, windy weather, noise), other pony's behaviour
- Children to be aware of the appropriate clothing to wear when leading a pony and why this can help to prevent an injury (hard boots, gloves and hat if necessary, at centre's discretion)
- Children should demonstrate correct procedure for approaching the horse and where to stand when putting on a headcollar
- Children should be able to gently manoeuvre a pony slightly when working around it, from the shoulders and haunches, and to walk a few steps backwards
- Children should have an awareness of safety with regards to their behaviour and actions (for example, closing stable door behind them)
- Children to be aware of their own position when leading (let the pony win, for example, head and neck should be in front of you). How to turn a pony safely, for example, away from you
- Children to be aware of talking to a pony when leading, for example 'walk on' and 'woah'
- Tie a horse up using a quick release knot and an awareness of the length of rope, why it's important to not tie a pony up long. They should know to tie the rope to bailing twine or safety

**Two star challenges

- For two star challenges, begin to lead your pony in trot too.
 - Can lead a pony in walk and trot. Can have assistance with trot, only needs to be a few strides.
- How do you stand a pony 'square' or hold a pony for someone else to handle? Find out what this means, how to do it and why it is needed.
 - Stand a pony square

- A basic version of hold a pony for inspection. So they are aware to stand on the same side as the other handler, and why. Discuss that an adult will usually do this, particularly if for vet inspections/treatment
- Discuss when you may have to lead a pony on the off-side and practice this
 - Walk only
 - Be able to turn in both directions
 - Can have assistance

GOLDEN GROOM

FEEDING PONIES

Prepare feeds for ponies and begin to recognise common feeds.

Key points: children will be able to:

*One star challenges

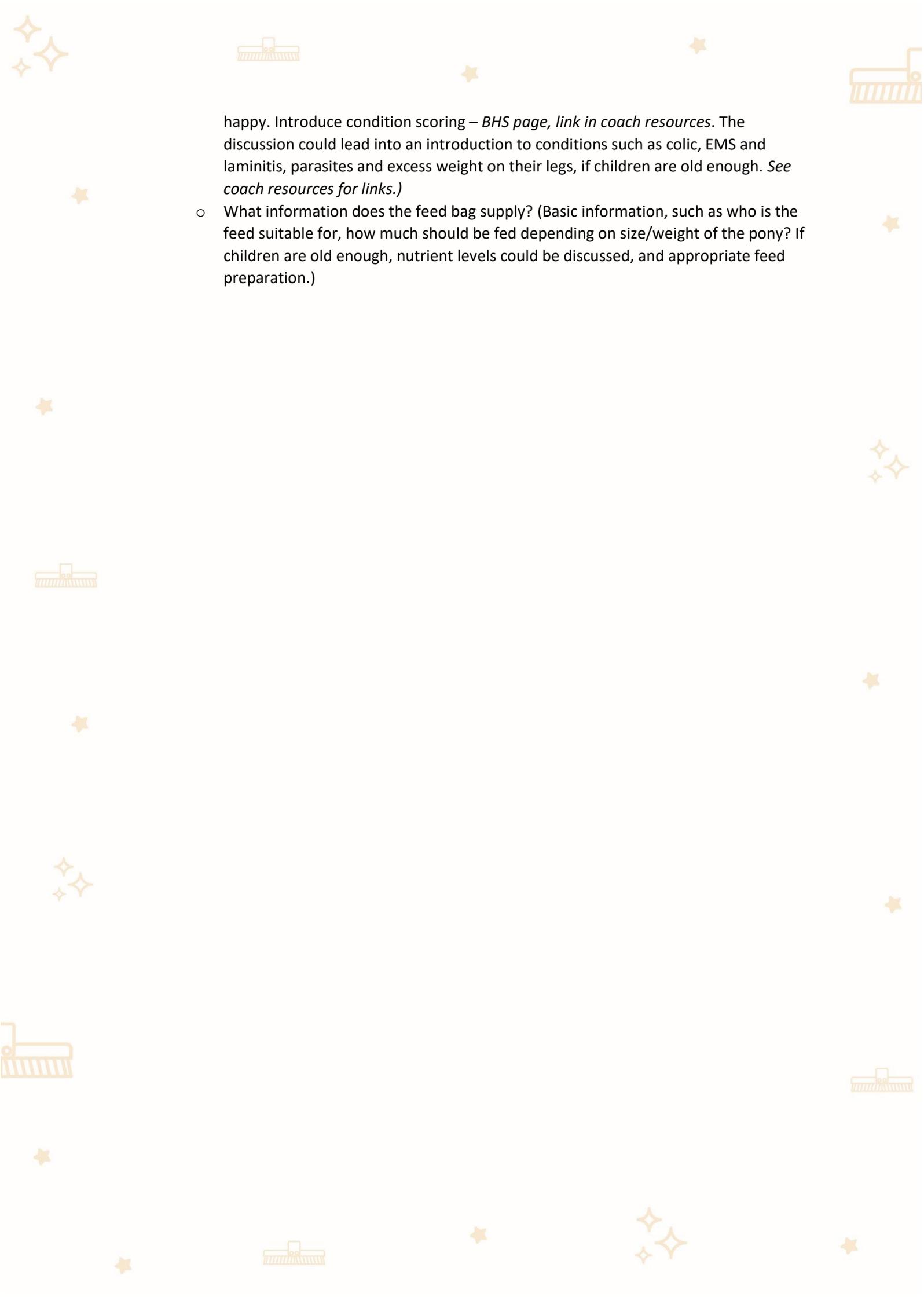
- Identify common feeds
- Assist with preparing bucket feeds
- Assist to fill up a haynet
- Help to keep the feed room clean and follow good hygiene practice after feeding ponies
- List two treats that are safe to give a pony and two unsafe treats for a pony
- Outline why it is important not to feed treats to horses and ponies you do not know

Coach guidance

- Common feeds; grass, hay/haylage, pony cubes or mix, chaff, sugarbeet (if available at the centre)
- Children should have assistance at all time to help prepare feeds. They are not expected to read a feed chart, but the coach can tell them how much of something to add to a bucket. Transferrable maths skills can be added here (for example half or a quarter of a scoop)
- If sugarbeet is used at the centre, children should be aware to never feed dry sugarbeet. Not expected to know how long to soak different types of sugarbeet for but you can discuss this
- Treats can include those given by hand (or in feed if that is centre's policy), or treats in the stable such as likits or treat balls. They should recognise that carrots are prepared in batons and not discs (although not expected to cut these themselves)
- Children are not expected to give the bucket feed to the pony to achieve the topic
- Assist with scrubbing food buckets after use and sweeping up the feed room. Should have an awareness for why it is important to do this

**Two star challenges

- Feeding damp, dusty or mouldy food is bad for ponies, just like we don't eat food that has turned sour or mouldy, your pony shouldn't either. Discover what feed might look or smell like if it has turned bad, and how storing feed correctly could prevent this from happening.
 - How feed is stored and why
 - How to recognise good feed (smell, damp or dusty, mould)
- If your yard has the facilities available you can learn how to weigh a haynet. Discover the other ways you can provide hay to ponies in the stable or in the field.
 - Assist to weigh a haynet
 - If they cannot lift the haynet they can read the weigh scales
 - If you do not have the facilities to weigh hay at the yard you can still discuss why it is important to feed the same to your pony, and when you may have to reduce or increase their hay allowance
- What happens if you feed too much food to your pony? Begin to think about why this is bad for their health and how to manage their feed in a healthy way.
 - Why feeding too much is bad for your pony (Ponies need to be healthy to be happy and perform their job. If they are over or underweight, they will not be healthy and



happy. Introduce condition scoring – *BHS page, link in coach resources*. The discussion could lead into an introduction to conditions such as colic, EMS and laminitis, parasites and excess weight on their legs, if children are old enough. See *coach resources for links*.)

- What information does the feed bag supply? (Basic information, such as who is the feed suitable for, how much should be fed depending on size/weight of the pony? If children are old enough, nutrient levels could be discussed, and appropriate feed preparation.)

PET PROTECTOR

PONY BEHAVIOR

This topic introduces basic horse and pony behaviour

Key points: children will be able to:

*One star challenges

- Outline the basic reactions and behaviours of ponies
- Outline the 'fight or flight' response
- State when a pony may 'fight or flight'
- Outline how wild ponies live with regards to herd behaviour
- List signs of poor or unsafe behaviour in the ridden pony
- Explain how their behaviour can have a positive or negative influence their pony's behaviour

Coach guidance

- Basic reactions and behaviours; Wanting to be in a herd (company), wanting to graze (trickle feeders), follow a routine, wanting to be outdoors (roaming). This can be remembered by 'the three F's'... friends, forage, freedom
- Introduction to fight or flight. If startled or in pain a pony may either try to run (flight) or be defensive and attack (fight). This reaction will be different in all ponies depending on the general nature of the pony or the type of incident
- Wild ponies: generally display basic reactions and behaviours. Other behaviour to discuss – alpha male/female, one 'lookout' pony when others sleeping, youngsters being disciplined by older members of the herd
- Ridden pony: running, napping, bucking, rearing, head to the side, reluctance to move forward

**Two star challenges

- There are many reasons a pony may show signs of poor behaviour. Find out what these are, what can be done to investigate and the regular checks you can do to hopefully keep your ponies happy ponies!
 - Discuss why a ridden pony may show signs of poor behaviour and what can be done to investigate (saddle fitter, equine dental technician, vet)
 - Introduce signs of stress and what this may look like (basic level only as this is covered in more detail in the *Happy ponies* topic within *Welshie Wizzers*)
 - How to improve a horse's behaviour (ie if in pain what can be done, if stressed what can be done)

PET PROTECTOR

FIVE FREEDOMS

An animal owner has a legal duty of care for their pet

*One star challenges

Key points: children will be able to:

- List the five freedoms regarding animal welfare that should be aspired to when looking after an animal
- Describe how each freedom relates to looking after any animal
- Describe how each freedom relates to looking after a pony
- Outline the legal responsibility of an owner

Coach guidance

- Five basic welfare needs as set out by the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (England & Wales), Animal Health & Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 and Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011:
 - Freedom from hunger and thirst
 - Freedom from discomfort
 - Freedom from pain, injury and disease
 - Freedom to express normal behaviour
 - Freedom from fear and distress
- The child can choose an animal of their choice – their own pet or favourite pony on the yard – to describe how the five freedoms can be met
- Legal responsibility – explain the term ‘Duty of Care’ and what an animal owner’s responsibility is. How they can meet the five freedoms and what happens if they do not meet these – link back to Welfare Warrior – Animal Welfare Charities

**Two star challenges

- Think about how the law is relevant to all animals kept as pets, or in places like farms and zoos.
 - Explain how the needs are relevant to all animals kept in captivity, including farm animals and animals kept in zoos
 - Could also discuss animal welfare is checked during an annual Riding School check
- What happens if the five freedoms are not met? How might this affect a pony? It might not lead to a serious case of neglect but it could lead to stress or unpleasant behaviours
 - For example, not giving company could lead to stress in the horse – link back to the pony behaviour topic for discussion points
- Discuss how to be a very caring owner and go above the basic requirements.
 - Discuss how to meet a pony’s welfare needs on a basic level, and how many things they will learn about in the challenge awards go above and beyond this and how this is best practice for how to look after a pony. For example, basic is providing enough forage to maintain a healthy weight, but best practice may be good quality forage/feed, supplements if vitamin and mineral levels are low, succulents such as carrots or apples (in moderation) to provide variety in the diet. Also, in comparison, consider why welfare concerns require a full investigation as a pony might look like

they have no food – but that pony could be on a restricted diet, or a pony looks thin because they may not be well

- Optional: Introduce the concept of euthanasia, and how this can and should be in the best interest of an animal and the responsibility an owner has to an animal to ensure this is done at the right time and in the right way
 - Depending on the age/maturity of the children you can decide on whether to discuss this or not.

PET PROTECTORS

ANIMAL CHAMPIONS

Understand the role of animal welfare charities and their work

*One star challenges

Key points: children will be able to:

- Outline the role of the British Horse Society
- List two national animal welfare charities
- List one local animal welfare charity
- Outline what is meant by a welfare concern
- Outline who to contact if they are concerned about an animal's welfare
- Outline how animal welfare charities improve animal welfare by campaigning and education

Guidance for coaches

- [BHS](#) – what we do. A very brief description is required. They could write a story, draw a picture or tell you something about the BHS.
- Examples of animal welfare charities (BHS, [World Horse Welfare](#), [Bransby Horses](#), [Horse and Pony Protection Association](#), [Redwings](#), [Horse Trust](#), [Donkey Sanctuary](#), [\(RSPCA \(England\)\)](#), [SSPCA \(Scotland\)](#), [USPCA \(Northern Ireland\)](#), [Blue Cross](#), [Dog's Trust](#), [Battersea](#), [National Animal Welfare Trust](#), [PDSA](#))
- To find a local equine welfare charity you can visit the National Equine Welfare Council website and [search by region](#).
- Alternatively you can discuss any local animal or equine welfare charity that you know in your area
- [What is a welfare concern](#)? You could discuss examples from our website that are suitable for the age of the children.
- Who to contact or tell with a welfare concern? The BHS can respond to non-urgent welfare concerns via our network of volunteer welfare advisors. If the concern is urgent an organisation such as RSPCA (who have paid field officers) should be contacted. Discuss urgent and non-urgent concerns. You could discuss the guidance on our website regarding [information required to report a concern](#). We would not expect a child to be able to report a welfare concern themselves as they would be too young, but an awareness is welcome.
- Many animal welfare charities are stretched to capacity; which may mean their resources are limited for the amount of animals they can rescue or look after at their rehoming centres. Animal welfare charities aim to educate owners and improve awareness of how to look after pets responsibly to try to prevent welfare concerns from happening. It's also important for children to have lessons like this and understand the importance of good animal welfare so they can be responsible owners when they grow up.

**Two star challenges

- Write a letter to your favourite charity thanking them for the work that they do. Tell them about why you love to support them – they will be so excited to hear from you!
- Come up with your own charity! What animals would you help and why, how would you do this, would you rescue animals or educate owners? What would the name be, what about the logo? What would be your first campaign?

PET PROTECTOR

PONY PASSPORT

Why does a pony need a passport if they're not going on holiday?

*One star challenges

Key points: children will be able to:

- Outline the information in a passport
- Outline why a pony needs a passport
- State why a vet will need to see a pony's passport
- State who can write in a passport
- State what a microchip is used for
- State who inserts the microchip
- Show you where a pony's microchip is usually found

Guidance for coaches

- Basic knowledge and awareness of equine passports required for this topic
- Information in a passport: Passport Issuing Organisation, pony's name, date or year of birth, passport number, silhouette and/or microchip number, owner's details, vaccination record, intended for or exclusion from human consumption. The children can look through a passport as a prompt and outline each of the above sections, where they are, etc. If a pony is registered with a breed society the passport will also include the names of the pony's dam and sire (mum and dad)
- Why does a pony need a passport: Helps to identify the pony (via silhouette drawing and/or microchip number). Ponies should always be travelled with their passport; even if just travelling to a local destination. Indicates if a pony is to be considered for the human food chain and ensures only ponies and horses suitable for human consumption are in the food chain – this will need to be handled with sensitivity as it may shock or upset some children. Explain that although it's not common in the UK, some countries do eat horse meat. The relevant authorities need to ensure that ponies and horses have not been given medication that may harm humans if the meat is eaten; therefore the passport records medication and ensures only ponies whose meat is safe go into the human food chain.
- Why a vet needs to see a passport: to record vaccinations and medications, to check a pony's ID, to check the human consumption intention before administering any medication
- Who can write in a passport: the owner – to sign the owner details section (although explain the PIO also needs to be informed of change of ownership) and section IX or section II in passports issued from 1 Jan 2016 (human consumption) may also require vet's signature, the vet can only complete vaccination and medication record
- Microchips: retrospective [microchipping deadlines](#) are approaching, all equines are required to be microchipped.
- Microchip use: to identify a pony, to quickly report a horse missing, to check if a horse is legally for sale. Only a vet can legally insert a microchip
- Microchips are usually inserted on the neck (left/near side)

**Two star challenges

- Find out even more about passports and the information they could contain. Did you know the passport could contain information about the pony's mother and father? What else might you be able to find out in a passport?
 - Look through passports at other sections not listed above, for example, breed lines, medication records, laboratory health tests (section VII)
- Are passports compulsory and required by law? You may already know the answer to this, but find out who enforces the rules and what might happen if your pony doesn't have a passport.
 - Outline the law and legislation surrounding passports and microchips, who enforces the legislation and the fines that could be given; who are Defra and what is their role?
- There is a central database for some UK nations that has some information about all ponies, most importantly microchip numbers so you can report your pony if it is stolen. Find out more about this and the information it holds.
 - State what the Central Equine Database is and the information it holds, or ScotEquine (for Scotland)

NOTES: Post Covid, the BHS Welfare team can visit centres or yards and carry out: microchip checks, fat scoring sessions, weigh ins etc and talk about horse welfare. If you want to arrange this for your centre please contact the Welfare Team via email: welfare@bhs.org.uk

JUNIOR JOCKEY

RIDING SKILLS 2

This topic will progress basic riding skills for beginner riders

*One star challenges

Key points: children will be able to:

- Follow basic instructions during a lesson
- Ride with an independent seat in walk
- Perform some balance exercises whilst on the pony
- Begin to trot in balance
- Outline the footfalls in walk
- Perform walk to trot transitions
- Outline the aids for riding in walk

Guidance for coaches

- Junior riders can be assisted, on lead rein, hold the saddle or neck strap whilst riding if needed
- Basic instructions can include; change the rein, go large, halt, whole ride, leading file in succession and one horse's length. Begin to explain why these terms are used in a lesson for all to follow
- Junior riders will be able to ride in walk without holding onto the saddle and not relying on their reins to keep balanced. Junior riders will be able to ride without stirrups in walk (although not at the same time, so walk without reins, but keep stirrups, then hold reins and no stirrups)
- Balance exercises could include; standing in stirrups, circling their arms in the same and different directions, bringing their knees to the pommel of the saddle and other arm movement, round-the-world, half and full scissors. These should be performed them with little assistance as they work towards an independent seat in walk
- Trot: junior to be able to trot the short side of an arena or an appropriate marked out distance. Working towards rising and a balanced position but can be assisted or hold neck strap.
- The junior rider should be able to tell you, or draw, the footfalls in walk
- Walk to trot and trot to walk transitions can be assisted. They do not need to be accurate transitions, but working towards upwards or downwards transitions completed within at least 4-5 strides
- Outline the aids: junior riders should be able to describe basic aids for halt, turns and halt to walk/walk to halt transitions. Aids include: reins, position (including where to look - important when turning) and legs.

**Two star challenges

- Walk without stirrups and without holding the reins at the same time
 - Can either have a leader or on lunge
- Stand in stirrups in walk for at least 5 strides
 - Can have leader or holder close by for assistance
- Trot the long side of the arena or appropriate marked out distance

- Junior riders do not need to be established in rising trot but should be beginning to recognise to rise in the correct rhythm
- In trot: one hand off rein
 - For a short length of arena
 - Assistance can be given
- Shorten and lengthen reins in trot
- Ride simple school figures in trot
 - 20m circle, simple changes of rein
- Knowledge: Tell you about trot diagonals in trot. Describe aids for trot. Tell you footfalls in trot
 - Junior rider can describe, without prompts, what each instruction in 1 star means (change the rein, go large, halt, whole ride, leading file in succession and one horse's length)
 - They can begin to describe how the horse is going or responding to their aids (you can support with relevant questions/prompts). Begin to think about what they would like to learn next and create a goal to complete in their next sessions (again with your support and prompts)
- Transitions: walk to trot/trot to walk are quicker and more accurate than 1 star challenges, so transition completed within 3 strides

***Three star challenges

- Skills: Rising in trot for at least one lap of the arena or appropriate marked out area on both reins. Learn about straightness in trot and keep pony on a straight line in trot. Learn about free walk, when and why you would do it and begin to work towards being able to do it.
- Balance tests – both hands off reins in trot. Arms outstretched/circle arms/hands on head
- Knowledge: can describe what the correct diagonal looks or feels like and knows how to change the diagonal. Can tell you which feet are moving in trot as they are riding. Can give a basic description of the free walk.
- Transitions: be more aware of preparing for transitions to make it happen on a counted stride. Can use markers if counting is difficult e.g. trot as pass through cones, walk when pass through next set cones.

JUNIOR JOCKEY

RIDING RIGHT

This topic introduces the rules of the school for riders to follow during lessons

*One star challenges

Key points: children will be able to:

- Follow the basic rules of the school when riding in a group
- Outline why it is important to follow these rules when riding in a group

Guidance for coaches

- Rules of the school
 - Approach other riders passing left to left
 - Riders at walk, work away from the track
 - Halt away from the track
 - Do not pass slower riders from behind – circle or turn away across the arena
 - Let all riders know if you plan to leave the arena
 - If your pony poos – clean it up
- Introduce some other rules you may follow at your centre; be polite to all riders, be kind to your pony, be polite to your coach
- Although junior riders are not required to ride independently, when riding on the lead rein the rules of the school can still be introduced

**Two star challenges

- When you begin to ride independently there will be other rules you will learn such as riding in open order. Find out what this means and how it applies to riding in an arena with other riders. Section off a part of an arena so you and your friends can practice open order, but on foot!
 - Discuss the term 'open order' and what this means, how it applies to riding in an arena and the importance of following the rules of the school to avoid accidents
 - Have a bit of fun sectioning off part of an arena. Ask the group to act out walk, trot, circles etc and then work in open order. They should use what they have learnt to not bump into each other!

JUNIOR JOCKEY

ARENA AWARENESS

Know your way around an arena with the letters and markers you may see

*One star challenges

Key points: children will be able to:

- Identify the position of school letters
- State the position of school letters and the measurements between A and C, E and B
- Tell you a poem or mnemonic to remember the order of the school letters

Guidance for coaches

- School letters in a standard 20mx40m arena; A, K, E, H, C, M, B, F, and X
- Junior rider will be aware that A and C is at the top and bottom of the school, half way between the two corners (junior rider to know the dimensions of the school) and E and B are in the middle of the long side
- An example of a mnemonic to help remember the letters (clockwise): All King Edwards Horses Carried Many Brave Fighters. Or they can make up their own!

**Two star challenges

- There are another two letters you can add to your diagram: D and G. Where do you think they will go?
 - Go through further letters of a 20x40 arena: D and G
- The marker 'X' isn't an actual marker in the arena. Practice your accuracy with stopping your pony in this place.
 - Practice this in some riding sessions
- Begin to follow instructions in your lessons that relate to the letters. It might be a change in direction at a certain letter, or begin a circle at a certain letter.
 - Basic school figures and instructions using the letters as markers and directions

JUNIOR JOCKEY

SADDLES AND BOOTS

This topic will introduce the saddle and its parts, and types of boots ponies may wear and why

*One star challenges

Key points: children will be able to:

- Name the parts of a saddle
- Identify a saddle cloth and a numnah
- Identify brushing boots and overreach boots
- State a reason why a pony may wear boots when being ridden
- Know that riding equipment should fit a pony and why this is important

Guidance for coaches

- General Purpose saddle only. Points to learn; pommel, seat, cantle, knee roll, saddle flap, stirrup leather, stirrup
- Children should be able to recognise a pair of brushing boots and a pair of overreach boots with basic Velcro fastenings and where on the legs they go
- Reasons to wear boots: simple reasons including protection from knocks (own legs/hooves), protection from environment (shrubs/overgrowth when riding out), better visibility (hi-vis boots when riding out)
- Riding equipment should fit: grasp of a basic concept that the equipment and tack they have learnt about should be the right size for their pony. Much like their shoes are fitted to their feet. If equipment doesn't fit it can cause rubs, sores and general discomfort (again, similar to if shoes don't fit).

**Two star challenges

- Introduce further points of the saddle such as; waist, panel, thigh roll, stirrup leather keeper, skirt, D ring, girth straps, buckle guard
- Learn about one other type of saddle and at least one way it is different to the saddle you ride in.
 - Introduce different types of saddle for different purposes for example jumping, dressage, western or any other type of saddle you may have at the centre.
- Put on a pair of boots
 - They can have assistance
 - Optional: discuss where brushing boots come to on the leg and how to recognise of a boot is too small or too big
- Learn about one other type of pony boot and what that type of boot may be used for.
 - Such as tendon and fetlock boots, sports boots and bandages, travel boot.
- The role of a saddle fitter

EQUINE EXPLORER

TREES AND PLANTS

This topic will introduce the crops, trees and plants that may be seen whilst riding out in the UK

*One star challenges

Key points: children will be able to:

- Identify two or more types of tree or shrub that may grow locally
- Identify two or more types of crop that is farmed and their use
- Outline how to ride out safely and respectfully with regards to crops, trees and plants
- Understand that some trees, shrubs and plants will be poisonous or harmful to horses
- List positive and negative reasons for trees and hedgerows in a paddock

Guidance for coaches

- Types of common tree or shrub, (or pictures if they are unavailable or out of season): Oak, Ash, Beech, Sycamore, Horse Chestnut, Holly, Yew, Birch, Hazel, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Blackberry. You could walk around your hedgerows in the field? Depending on the time of year you could look at the different berries or fruit the trees produce – **WARN CHILDREN NOT TO TOUCH/PICK/EAT THE FRUITS ALWAYS BE MINDFUL SOME MAY BE HARMFUL OR POISONOUS TO HUMANS**
- Common crops from local examples or pictures if needed: Wheat, Barley, Oats, Oilseed Rape, Potatoes, Swede and Turnips
- Children to recognise the uses for the crops and what they may be farmed for
- If anything that you choose to identify is poisonous to horses, talk about this, but you do not have to go over poisonous plants (this is another topic) however the two can be linked. The take-away message here is for children to be aware that some plants/trees/shrubs are poisonous and to not let ponies graze when riding out
- How to ride safely/ respectfully: ensure you have permission to ride on the land, particularly if it is privately owned. Stick to the tracks; walk to reduce damage from footfall particularly in wet weather, do not allow pony to graze or eat any crops and do not pick any yourself. Do not ride on crops or cultivated land (except on public rights of way), including stubble (which may be sown with a new crop) and young grass
- Discuss how trees may affect their pony. For example, sycamore saplings can be poisonous, but other, safe trees are often found providing shelter in paddocks. Trees/hedges also play an important role in reducing flooding and fighting climate change. Hedgerows and trees can provide variety for a pony's diet. Negatives: during storms or heavy wind/rainfall branches could fall down from the tree, hitting the pony or leaving behind sharp edges, if a hedgerow is a fence boundary it would need regular checking to ensure no holes or weak spots are identified where a pony could push through. If harmful to ponies would need fencing off. If the leaves/seeds/fruit are harmful to ponies (for example sycamore helicopter seeds, or acorns from oaks) and trees are nearby, would need regular raking to remove any that blew into paddocks which could be a lot of maintenance.

**Two star challenges

- Have some knowledge of when the crops they identify may be harvested, and what this means. What is used to harvest the crops?

- Create a trees and plants explorer guide

EQUINE EXPLORER

NAVIGATION 1

Basic map reading skills for beginners

*One star challenges

Key points: children will be able to:

- Tell you what a map is and it's use
- Use a simple map to locate an object
- Follow a simple route on a map
- Identify a map that can be used for their region
- Identify simple symbols or markings on a map
- Identify markings for a footpath and bridleway
- Understand where they are allowed to ride
- Identify the points on a compass

Guidance for coaches

- Ideally, this topic works well if you can let children look at a paper map, such as an Ordnance Survey map. OS map recommended for horse riding as they show bridleways, footpaths etc are 1:25000 scale (OS Explorer maps). (OS maps cover England, Scotland and Wales, if this is not applicable to your Nation please discuss another map available to you). You can buy OS maps at most WH Smiths or you can purchase online via [Ordnance Survey](#).
- Maps: give a visual representation/diagram/picture of an area. They include symbols and markings to help you find your way through the area and show you where things are. They help with the two D's: Distance and Direction. Note: if children are unfamiliar with maps you may need to also explain that maps are a birds eye view of an area, you are looking down.
- Use a simple map: Help children to draw a simple map of an area at the centre. Could be a room such as a classroom, feed room or tack room, or an area such as the stables or a paddock. Help them to create the map (don't worry about it being to scale), and include objects and items within the area. This can be done by the coach drawing a large map on a whiteboard with each child helping to draw an object, or each child draw a small map of their own. Then hide an object and mark on the map with a 'X' – children to locate objects. For an example, see the [OS website](#):
- Follow a simple route: If the maps used above are suitable to use you can use the children's maps for this next task, but if not, you may have to have a pre-prepared map (of the yard/centre). Plot a simple route on the map for the children to follow. This get's them thinking about direction. Can they count their steps as they go? This gets them thinking about distance. These are the two keys things a map will tell you; distance and direction.
- Identify a map: children may be familiar with apps such as Google Maps etc. They should be able to name a map they can use on paper too, for example Ordnance Survey (OS) maps (OS maps cover England, Scotland and Wales, if this is not applicable to your Nation please discuss another map available to you)
- Simple symbols or markings: the child can identify four map symbols. Simple map symbols include: place of worship, parking, nature reserve, camp site, information centre
- Children to know the markings for footpath and bridleway (relevant to their Nation)
- Footpaths - for walking, running, mobility scooters or powered wheelchairs

- Bridleways - for walking, horse riding, bicycles, mobility scooters or powered wheelchairs
On an OS map, 1:25000 scale, these are as follows:

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY		Rights of way are not shown on maps of Scotland
	Footpath	Public rights of way shown on OS maps have been taken from local authority definitive maps and later amendments. Rights of way are liable to change and may not be clearly defined on the ground. Please check with the relevant local authority for the latest information. The representation on this map of any other road, track or path is no evidence of the existence of a right of way
	Bridleway	
	Byway open to all traffic	
	Restricted byway (not for use by mechanically propelled vehicles)	

- Children to understand they are permitted to ride on a bridleway, but not permitted to ride on a footpath. Discuss why you should only ride where you are allowed to
- Points of a compass: North, East, South, West. Help them to learn with a phrase such as Naughty Elephants Squirt Water or Never Eat Shredded Wheat

**Two star challenges

- Introduce contours on a map and how this relates to exploring on horseback
 - Contours are the orange lines on a map that tell you how high and steep a gradient is. The more lines you see, the higher the hills. If the lines are close together, the sides of the hill are very steep. If there are big gaps between the lines, the slope is gentle
 - Ideally you want to avoid steep hills on horseback!
- Think about why it is important to know what landmarks or places of interest are around your route and how this may help to plan your journey time. Have a look at a route on a map and look for anything of interest.
 - If on horseback, particularly riding an unfamiliar route, a map could tell you a lot about the other road users you may meet. For example, if riding near or past a school you will know there are two times during most weekdays where that school will be very busy with people and cars. However, quieter on weekends or school holidays. Similarly, if you are riding on a country park (if permitted access) you may come across lots of walkers, children and dogs and these places will likely to be busier during weekends and school holidays.
- Maps are very colourful. Learn about at least two other markings or symbols with different colours to what you have learnt for 1* and tell your friends about them.
 - This is a bit of research for the group. You could allocate different markings/symbols etc to the group or let them choose their own. Then, the group come back to tell each other about what they have found.
 - If using OS maps as an example, would already know blue (symbols) and rights of way (green).
 - Other colours on a map include pink, blue, orange indicate roads and paths, black lines markers help to indicate train lines, orange lines indicate contours and green patches indicate woodland

EQUINE EXPLORER

BE SAFE, BE SEEN

This topic will introduce the equipment that should be worn whilst riding out in any environment.

*One star challenges

Key points: children will be able to:

- State what hi vis means
- Identify basic safety equipment for themselves and their pony
- State why it is important to wear bright riding kit when riding out
- Identify clothing and equipment that will help others see them when riding out in different environments

Guidance for coaches

- Basic safety equipment: Hat, body protector, boots (suitable for riding), gloves, a hi viz tabard (or jacket) and hi viz leg wraps or boots (for the horse). You can discuss any equipment you have at the yard in addition to that listed
- Discuss dark, light and reflective clothing and ask them which is better to be seen against different backgrounds / environments / weather conditions
- Discuss when out in a rural setting how low flying aircraft, cyclists, rambles, dog walkers, other road users will be able to make better decisions if they (the rider) can be seen sooner
- Children should be able to get dressed ready to safely ride out, and show where on a pony additional hi viz would go. The child is not required to put the equipment on the pony themselves but can help

**Two star challenges

- Some hi vis wear is reflective, some is fluorescent and some will be both. Find out what these terms mean and why they help to keep you and your pony safe when riding out.
 - Be able to explain the difference between reflective and fluorescent hi viz and their merits
- Children to recognise the function of each item, and why this may help them to remain safe whilst riding out
 - Eg. Leg bands – move as the horse is walking so catch the eye quicker. Hat band – can be seen above hedgerows. Exercise sheet/hat silk – a big block of colour that can be seen from above which is useful for helicopter/chinook pilots important if in a low flying zone
- Create a 'Be safe, be seen' poster to display at your yard and encourage all riders to wear hi vis.
- Discuss the advantages of lights being worn on the rider, and where they should be worn
 - In a report it was found that riders should choose to wear lights wherever possible, ideally in a way that highlights their width (for example, on their shoulders). Lights should be red on the rear of the horse/rider and white if seen from the front. Full report is on our website: <https://www.bhs.org.uk/advice-and-information/tack-and-equipment/what-to-wear/hi-viz>

EQUINE EXPLORER

HACKING

Go on a short hack with your pony and enjoy the benefits of riding outside!

*One star challenges

Key points: children will be able to:

- Tell you what hacking means
- State a benefit of hacking for both rider and pony
- Tell you which side of the road to ride on when hacking
- Demonstrate the signal for a left turn, right turn, stop and slow down
- Go on a short hack
- Signal and observe appropriately, following instructions
- Be polite to other road users

Guidance for coaches

- Junior rider can be on lead rein
- Walk hack only required
- Hack can be a minimum of 15 minutes, on public or private roads or tracks – whatever you have available at your centre. Good practice regards wearing hi-vis must be followed
- Junior rider should be able to follow the instructions of the ride leader with regards to signalling and observing
- Junior should have an awareness of thanking polite road users by a nod, smile or wave

**Two star challenges

- When you are riding on the road you will also have to follow any road signs that give instructions. Road signs will also help you to prepare for what is ahead. Your challenge is to learn these common road signs, can you draw them out?
 - Stop
 - Give Way
 - Roundabout ahead
 - Traffic signals ahead
 - Roadworks ahead
 - Maximum Speed Limit
 - Beware of children / children crossing
 - Beware of horses
 - One Way
 - You can also add any that may be relevant or common to where you hack
- You won't be riding your pony as fast as the maximum speed limit allows on the road, but why is it important and helpful to know what the speed limit is?
 - Discussion regarding understanding how fast other road users may be on that road. Discuss safety considerations for riding along a 'fast' road and whether different routes should be used (if possible)

STABLE STAR

ON THE YARD

What to do if an accident, incident or near miss happens on the yard. Be a Stable Star and help to prevent accidents for either yourself or your friends.

*One star challenges

Key points: children will be able to:

- Tell you what an accident, incident and near miss are
- Give a reason why any accident, incident or near miss should be reported to an adult
- Identify the appropriate person on the yard to report to if they see or are involved in an accident, incident or near miss
- Give examples of dangers or risks on a yard that could lead to an accident
- Outline how to reduce the risk of an accident happening

Guidance for coaches

- This can be linked to a yard code of conduct that the group can decide on and how a code of conduct will help to reduce the risk of accidents, for example; no running, no shouting etc. Link these back to the pony behaviour topic and how a pony could react
- Dangers or risks on a yard; such as blocking exits, leaving equipment or tack out or not tidying away/storing equipment appropriately, trailing wires, leaving gates open, leading ponies without the correct equipment, heavy objects and falling over hazards
- Reduce risk: by following yard code of conduct, wearing appropriate clothing when on the yard, behaving responsibly, following guidance from coaches

Two Star challenges

- Discover what a risk assessment is and carry one out for an activity on the yard.
 - Discuss risk assessments and complete the risk assessment in the book for an activity on the yard
- Discuss some make-believe accidents, incidents or near misses. What can you learn from them to prevent them happening again?
 - Present some examples of accidents on the yard. Ask the group what could be learnt from the accident or incident, could it happen again, what could be done to reduce the risk of the accident from happening again?

STABLE STAR

BE SECURE

Have a general understanding of yard security to look after the safety of all people, ponies, equipment and facilities.

*One star challenges

Key points: children will be able to:

- Recognise any areas within the centre they are not allowed to go unsupervised
- Describe the importance of keeping a yard and centre secure
- Outline the process for reporting visitors
- Describe the importance of closing gates and doors when leaving an area or field
- Describe the importance of making sure stable doors are shut and bolted
- Describe the importance of putting equipment back in the correct place after use

Guidance for coaches

- Secure areas: this is more so they know where they should not go unsupervised, and if they need to enter an area (for example the office or another area that is usually locked how they enter if they are allowed). Also important for them to recognise the area/s that are usually locked so if they see it unlocked they can report this to a staff member
- Importance of shutting stable doors and to use both bolts when a pony is in (stable doors should have a lower/bottom bolt or kick bolt so a pony cannot get a foot wedged at the bottom)
- Equipment could include yard tools, tack, hat or body protector they borrow
- Reporting visitors: follow your centre protocol for this. Takeaway message is if they see someone on the yard they do not know that is not with another member of staff, to report this

**Two star challenges

- Be a security guard for the day. Imagine you are making a final check of the yard before locking up. What areas need to be secure, or gates need to be shut before you could go home? Make your checklist on the next page.
- Plan an amazing adventure: The adventure of the escaped pony! Imagine you are a pony whose stable door has been left open, what would you do? Write a story, draw a map or draw a picture
 - It doesn't have to be a pony on the yard they are at. They can use any yard in any environment, perhaps the pony lives on another planet or lives in their favourite video game? They can be as creative as they like!

STABLE STAR

SPRING CLEAN

Be a Stable Star and help to tidy up the yard

*One star challenges

Key points: children will be able to:

- Follow instructions and work together as a team to clean the yard
- Use equipment appropriately
- Dispose of litter or waste appropriately
- Describe why a thorough clean is beneficial
- Describe areas or equipment that would be cleaned or maintained during an annual spring clean

Guidance for coaches

- Go through safety rules concerning using equipment
- This topic gives an overview of what can be done in addition to routine cleaning/tidying on a yard. For example disinfecting the stables/yard floor, scrubbing feed buckets, dusting for cobwebs, weeding, cleaning/disinfecting grooming brushes, yard tools, cleaning arena/dressage markers and boards, repainting fences, cleaning water troughs etc. The child is not expecting to handle/use any hazardous chemicals or harsh cleaning products but an appreciation for why these may be used

**Two star challenge

- Take on the role of Yard Manager. Create a list of jobs that need to be done on a yard to keep it clean, tidy and safe. Assign your jobs to those that need to be carried out weekly, monthly or yearly.
 - You can help with the list of jobs that they then assign to each category based on how important they think they are.
 - Three categories to keep simple: once a week, once a month, once a year or you could add an extra category of daily
- Take your spring cleaning skills home with you! Spring clean your bedroom until it is sparkling! Ask an adult if you can help tidy up another area; it could be another room, the garden or even the garage or shed.

STABLE STAR

WORK SMART

Reduce the risk of injury by following the correct procedure to lift or move heavy items

*One star challenges

Key points: children will be able to:

- Outline why it is important not to lift a heavy item
- Demonstrate the correct procedure for lifting and carrying an item
- Demonstrate the correct procedure for carrying or moving common yard items and equipment
- Outline why it is important to follow correct lifting procedure
- Handle equipment with consideration
- Demonstrate the correct procedure for sharing a load between two people
- Identify items they should not try to lift

Guidance for coaches

- Correct procedure for lifting/carrying an item: secure foot placement, weight bearing evenly over feet and knees, bend knees, back straight, lift from the legs (not the back). Carry item as close to body as can, place down slowly by bending knees and not back.
- Common yard items or equipment the children could be aware of how to carry safely (depending on child's age, height): saddle and bridle, mucking out equipment, haynet
- Handle equipment with consideration: considerations like tack is expensive, so place down gently, do not drag items on the floor as this is a trip hazard and could cause ponies to spook
- Items they should not try to lift could be: bales of hay/straw/shavings, jump wings, full buckets of water
- Sharing a load: same lifting technique applies but should communicate with the person ie, "1, 2, 3, lift!". The people should be spaced out enough to share the load evenly (so for example a jump pole can be carried with two people, one person at each end). Remember to communicate when you are moving and when you are prepared to place the item down.

**Two star challenges

- Some items such as bags of horse feed or bales of shavings will have the weight displayed on the bag. A wheelbarrow will also have a weight limit displayed so it's not overloaded. Know where to find this information so you can decide if an item is too heavy for you.
 - Know where to look to find the weight of something, for example, feed bag or weight limit of a wheelbarrow and why it is important to not overload
- What you have learnt about in this topic is generally called 'manual handling' find out what this means and all the tasks that are included in this description.
 - What is the definition of manual handling
 - Name all manual handling activities – lifting, putting down, carrying, pulling, pushing and moving



HELPING HERO

BEING GREEN



This topic will encourage consideration of the environmental impact ponies and a stable yard might have, and how the child can help benefit the environment

*One star challenges

Key points: children will be able to:

- State what being kind to the environment means, and why it's important to consider actions and impact
- Identify what could (on the yard) have a bad effect on the environment
- Identify what could be done at the yard to improve the environmental impact
- Identify what they could do away from the yard to reduce their environmental impact



Guidance for coaches

- Children should be able to list things that are bad for the environment (for example, single use plastic, throwing waste that could be recycled, wasting water, travelling in vehicles that use petrol/diesel, muck heap close to water source, littering, throwing away food waste instead of composting (horse and human food), energy waste (leaving lights on, overfilling kettle, leaving doors open (if heating a room), using energy saving lightbulbs)
- You can help the children come up with positive suggestions and changes, however we appreciate there are limitations to what you can do. Explain this to the children that financial reasons, lack of space/equipment or facilities. Try not to dampen their spirits by just saying 'no' to ideas they may have. You could tell them that a good idea never expires and you will keep hold of all the ideas and implement them when you can. Encourage them that small things can make a big different such as switching off the lights, recycling or composting. Is there anything you could stop selling/supplying (such as bottled water or bottled drinks to encourage people to bring their own reusable bottle? Or if you have a café switch from individual sauce sachets to bottles, remove plastic cutlery?). If you already implement any green initiatives or swaps then share this with the group.
- Discuss at least one idea for each of the above on how to improve the impact on the environment, for example: Switching off lights and electric fencing when not in use, using solar power where possible (electric fence charger), recycling when possible, rain water collection butts, using leftover water from horse buckets to water plants on the yard instead of down the drain, using low energy light bulbs, composting food waste, sharing lifts to shows and bulk ordering bedding and feed with others to reduce fuel/carbon footprint
- Away from the yard; discuss things such as not littering, walking or cycling where possible, recycling, switching off lights when not in use, not using single use plastic,

**Two star challenge

- What impact will you have? Think of a points system for the changes and actions you can do. Then create your own totalizer to keep track of all your points and measure all the positive actions you are taking! Seeing the effect you are having in this visual way will encourage you to keep it up and you can be really proud of yourself! Even better, can you make your totalizer out of things that might have gone to waste?
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- This can be done on an individual basis or as a group at the yard. You and the children can do this any way you like. The aim is for them to be able to see the impact they are having and to encourage small changes to be made. Firstly, list all the positive actions, swaps etc that can be done to be a bit more 'green'. Allocate points, or stars, or anything that can be used to record or score. For example, 1 point for bringing in a reusable water bottle for their drink, 1 point for bringing a packed lunch without cling film, 2 points for sharing a lift to the yard, 3 points for walking. Think of as many ideas as possible. Then, add to your totalizer each time and give praise!
 - Totalizer could be a poster on the wall or could even be made out of things that might have gone in the bin...wash any items first though!
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HELPING HERO

EQUESTRIAN ACCESS GROUPS

Discover how equestrian access groups are heroes by helping to protect and extend safer off-road routes

*One star challenges

Key points: children will be able to:

- Give a benefit for horse riders to be able to access off road routes
- State the role of an equestrian access group
- Outline the role of the BHS in protecting, extending and promoting off road routes

Guidance for coaches

- Benefits of Riding out: change of scenery for you and your horse, engages horse's mental activity, allows horse to stretch and relax, fun for both horse and rider, gets horses used to different surfaces, off road routes will be quieter with no motor vehicles, it also reduces the risk of a road traffic accident when riding not on the road. Off road routes that include hills can help with fitness of horse.
- Equestrian Access Groups work across the UK to defend, extend and promote safe, easily accessible off-road riding for everyone: <https://www.bhs.org.uk/our-work/access/equestrian-access-groups>
- How the BHS protect and improve access:
 - Launch new routes, public bridleways and fundraise to defend endangered rights of way for riders and carriage drivers
 - Record legal rights, and preserve and reinstate routes
 - Provide localised advice, support and assistance through our network of dedicated Access Officers
- Find your [Equestrian Access Group](#)

**Two star challenges

- Find a nearby bridleway group on the BHS Website
- Discuss when you may need to contact an Equestrian Access Group and all the ways they may be able to help.
 - Discuss when you may need to contact your local group (I.e your favourite route is blocked or overgrown)
- Look into ways to support your local access group – is there a route they need mapping, a local bridleway to clear?
 - Find your [Equestrian Access Group](#)
- Find a BHS campaign related to access and rights of way and discuss why this campaign is important.
 - Unrecorded bridleways to be extinguished in 2026: [Project 2026](#)
 - [BHS Ride Out Fund](#)
 - [BHS Ride Out UK](#)
 - Access and bridleways campaigns [home page](#)



HELPING HERO

HORSE INCIDENTS



How to report an incident and how this information helps to improve the safety and wellbeing of ponies and their riders.

*One star challenges

Key points: children will be able to:

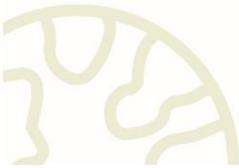
- Tell you what an incident is
- Outline why it is important to report an incident
- Identify who you can report an incident to
- Outline the role of the BHS with regards to horse incidents

Guidance for coaches

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- An incident is an event that has happened that has, or could have, led to an accident, injury, near miss, trauma (physical or psychological) or a general negative experience with a horse and/or rider. With regards to a horse related incident this could involve a road traffic accident, Chinese lanterns, fireworks or any other incident that has affected a horse or pony.
 - Examples of incidents on the BHS website: <https://www.bhs.org.uk/advice-and-information/common-incidents>.
 - Be mindful that some examples relate to road traffic accidents, which may be upsetting or scary for children to understand (they may be worried it will happen to them). You do not have to discuss all types of incidents, or the seriousness of some incidents if you feel this is not suitable for the group. Also explain they will learn about ways to reduce the risk of accidents occurring (wearing hi-vis, observing on the road, learning about horse behaviour and how to react)
 - Reporting: we do not expect children to report incidents themselves. However the message should be they are aware they can ask an adult (or recommend to an adult) to report an incident. To report an incident to the BHS: <https://www.bhs.org.uk/our-work/safety/report-an-incident>
 - Sometimes, depending on the nature or seriousness of the incident you may also report to the Police your Local Authority or MP
 - BHS collate data from their horse incidents site and use this to lobby or campaign for a positive change to improve the safety (to reduce the number of incidents occurring). For example, if many incidents regarding road accidents are reported on the same stretch of road, the BHS would work to campaign/lobby the relevant authorities to try to reduce the national speed limit, or improve signage to warn drivers of horses.
 - To see some success stories visit <https://www.bhs.org.uk/our-work/safety/road-safety-week> or our press centre [News results | British Horse Society \(bhs.org.uk\)](https://www.bhs.org.uk/news-results)
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**Two star challenges

- The British Horse Society give away free car stickers to help spread the message to drive slowly and safely past horses on the road. Find out how to get one (you may need to ask an adult to help) and give this to an adult to put in their car. Think of all the people that may see this car sticker!
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- Individual car stickers can be requested on the website(an adult should complete the online form) [Get your Free Car Sticker - Road Safety Week | British Horse Society \(bhs.org.uk\)](https://www.bhs.org.uk), or speak to the BHS Safety Team to request multiple stickers to keep at your centre ready to give out
 - Create a poster, leaflet or a radio advert that promotes the reporting of horse incidents.
 - You could focus on one type of incident (e.g fireworks) or a general poster on reporting incidents.
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HELPING HERO

CONSERVATION

What is conservation grazing and how does it benefit our natural environment and the grazing animals

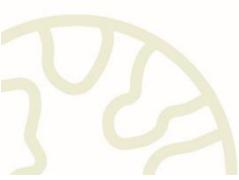
*One star challenges

Key points: children will be able to:

- Outline what conservation grazing is
- State one advantage of conservation grazing
- Identify grazing animals that could be used in a conservation grazing pasture
- Identify two breeds of pony that are used within conservation grazing
- State why specific breeds of animal are used for a conservation grazing project
- Describe how to enjoy a conservation site with respect to the animals and wildlife



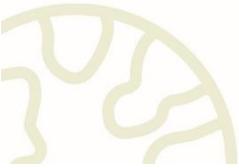
Guidance for coaches

- Conservation grazing is simply livestock grazing to manage a wildlife site to promote biodiversity – variety of life. Biodiversity refers to all life on earth, from bacteria to animals, plants to people. Conservation grazing is a traditional system deep within UK heritage and follows the lifestyle of rural communities who would graze their animals and live off the land
 - Benefits: most effective and natural way to maintain certain habitats such as grassland and heathland, and can help to keep area open ensuring a wider range of plants and animals. Helps to conserve grassland and heathland habitats, more environmentally friendly to manage grassland this way than via mechanical (machine) or artificial means (ploughing, fertilising) so can help to promote undisturbed native wildlife, promotes a wider diversity of species on the land, help preserve and promote rare, native breeds of grazing animals.
 - Benefits to humans: consuming meat from animals raised on a varied, natural diet
 - Grazing animals can be selective in what they eat and so help to promote different plants to grow. Cows will eat more common and tough plant species which allows delicate or less competitive plants to grow. Some sheep will eat bramble and scrub plants/grasses and are ideal for overgrown sites.
 - Grazing animals are usually native breeds to the UK (or nation/region where the area is), as these breeds tend to be able to thrive with little interference from humans due to their hardy nature. Often the land might be poor quality grazing (scrubland) so native breeds tend to be able to live well off the grass or heathland and require little additional feed or supplementation to the diet. Native breeds are also well equipped to deal with the weather conditions (thick, waterproof coat, for example). A native breed will be better suited to the particular conditions of the area, for example harsh weather, wet grassland, steep slopes and low quality grazing
 - Native breeds of sheep, cattle, goat and pony are used with good success
 - Breeds of pony include Exmoor, Dartmoor, Shetland, New Forest, Welsh mountain and a Polish breed called Konik ([see Norfolk and Suffolk Broads](#))
 - If visiting a conservation site, keep dogs on leads but let it go if you feel threatened by the animals, stay away from mother and young (they may feel threatened), be aware of electric fencing, pick up any dog mess, take litter home with you, follow any signs that may indicate any areas to not walk through
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- Discuss if you have any shared or cross grazing at your centre. This may not necessarily be for conservation purposes but it can help to describe the benefits of different animals grazing together and the benefits it has on the land



****Two star challenges**

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- Native and rare breeds are often successfully introduced to conservation grazing projects. What benefits does this have for the breed? The National Trust have breeds of sheep and cattle such as Belted Galloways, Sussex cows and Herdwick sheep living together. Research at least one of these breeds and tell your coach why mixed herds are suited to this type of project.
 - Look into native breeds of sheep and cattle that are used, for example the [National Trust](#) use Belted Galloways, Sussex cows and Herdwick sheep. Discuss why sheep and cattle are used together (the way they eat grass and trample the ground)
 - Information on breeds available from [Rare Breeds Survival Trust](#)