
Horse Welfare at BHS Assessments

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Please note: This document is uncontrolled once printed. Please check with the BHS Education Team for the most up to date version.

1. Introduction

The British Horse Society (BHS) is the charity dedicated to encouraging people and horses to enjoy life together by furthering equine education, knowledge and skills. Horse welfare is at the heart of all that we do, including when we deliver services such as BHS Assessments.

When the BHS organise and deliver assessments, we aim to protect and promote the health, safety and welfare of all involved which includes candidates, assessors horses and others.

This statement tells you how we safeguard horses and ponies during assessments.

This statement has been created in line with *The British Horse Society: Code of Conduct for Welfare of Horses at Events and Activities* and the *BHS Guiding Principles*.

2. Scope and applicability

This statement applies to:

- BHS assessments:
 - Stage 1
 - Stage 2
 - Stage 3
 - Stage 4
 - Performance
 - Fellowship

This includes qualifications awarded by the BHS and BHSQ.

This statement does not apply to any activity outside the scope of a BHS assessment. It does not apply during training activities for assessments.

3. Purpose and objectives

This document will:

- Define our approach to horse welfare at BHS assessments.
- Detail the processes in place to protect and promote horse welfare at BHS assessments.
- Detail the responsibilities of those involved in BHS assessments towards safeguarding horses at BHS assessments.

It is useful to refer to the following BHS documents, policies or guidance when reading this:

- [Health and Safety Statement for BHS Assessments](#)
- [Approved Centre Criteria: Riding Schools](#)
- [Internal Quality Assurance Policy](#)
- [Terms and Conditions for BHS Assessments](#)

4. Terms and definitions

Approved assessment centre is any location where a BHS assessment delivered by the BHS Education Team is taking place.

Candidate is anyone taking a BHS assessment.

A BHS **assessor** is contracted to make assessment decisions at BHS assessments.

Horse includes any horse or pony within a BHS assessment.

5. The BHS's approach to horse welfare at BHS assessments

We expect all those involved in our assessments to promote and protect the welfare of horses. To always acknowledge and accept that the welfare of the horse must be paramount and must never be compromised for competitive or commercial influences.

The BHS strongly believes that good welfare and equestrianism must, and do, go together. We have created *Guiding Principles* which are based around the Five Domains Model (Appendix 1). These underpin all interactions and activities with horses, including at BHS assessments, to ensure that not only their physical requirements are considered, but their emotional and mental wellbeing needs too.

The BHS is committed to ensuring that assessments have the highest horse welfare standards at the forefront of delivery. To ensure this happens, four underpinning measures are the foundations of our assessments and qualifications. We will:

- Stop the assessment at any time should there be any concern for the health, safety and/or welfare of the horses.
- Deliver assessments at establishments that meet the BHS Approved Centre Criteria.
- Only deploy qualified and experienced equestrians as assessors.
- Include the promotion of horse welfare within all qualification design and development.

6. Reporting horse welfare concerns at a BHS assessment

Concerns regarding horse welfare at a BHS assessment should be reported to the BHS assessor on the day of the assessment as soon as possible.

Should anyone at the assessment wish to report a horse welfare concern after the assessment, please refer to the [BHS Raising Concerns Policy](#).

7. The BHS

The BHS will ensure that assessments are delivered at BHS Approved Riding Schools. The BHS will commit to regular quality assurance of these centres as detailed in the *BHS Approved Centre Criteria: Riding Schools*, and *Assessment Centre Approval and Allocation Policy*.

There may be exceptions to the requirement of BHS Approved Riding School status is for some assessments and this is approved on a case-by-case basis. In exceptional circumstances assessments may be held at establishments that may not be a licensed or BHS Approved Riding School. This may be for reasons such as the types of horses required may require outsourcing via centres or others that specialise in areas such as rehabilitation, competition or rescue. In each case, the assessment centre will be inspected and approved by the Education Team against the *BHS Approved Centre Criteria: Riding Schools* where appropriate.

The BHS is responsible for ensuring an internal quality assurance policy and process is adhered to, which includes monitoring and responding to concerns regarding horse welfare at assessments. If concerns are raised regarding horse welfare during an assessment, the BHS will investigate as necessary. The BHS Education Team may suspend Approved assessment centre status until the investigation is complete.

8. BHS Approved assessment centres

BHS Approved assessment centres adhere to detailed criteria set out in the *BHS Approved Centre Criteria: Riding Schools*. The BHS Approved Centre process is managed by the BHS Approved Centre Team. BHS Approved assessment centres in the UK will hold a current Local Authority Riding School License if appropriate to their business.

The *BHS Approved Centre Criteria: Riding Schools* outlines the expectations for horse care as:

Meeting the daily and routine health care, exercise and welfare needs of all horses and ponies should always be the highest priority. Centres will need to have sufficient knowledge and experienced staff to ensure acceptable horse care standards are maintained throughout the seasons. Providing suitable shelter/accommodation, and minimising risk of disease through an effective isolation procedure/facility and protocols and a preventative fire risk assessment being in place, are few of the required measures involved in helping to keep horses and ponies safe. All horses should be in a healthy condition and those in work should have fitness levels appropriate to their workload. In addition to onsite assessment sampling undertaken by a BHS Approved Centre Inspector, the evidencing of horses being in a healthy condition, will be supported by the Centre maintaining proactive plans for all routine aspects such as grooming, feeding, exercise, maintaining a healthy weight, worming programme, veterinary, dentistry and shoeing/trimming.

BHS Approved assessment centres outside of the UK must comply with any Government Legislation as required by law. Horse care and welfare standards are inspected to an equivalent standard as our UK centres.

Approved assessment centres have a weight limit in place for riders appropriate for the horses at their centre. This will be adhered to for riding assessments.

The BHS Education Team will provide a draft timetable to the assessment centre approximately four weeks before the assessment. The assessment centre should contact the BHS Education Team to request any changes to the timetable they feel necessary to support the welfare of horses on the day. For 'in-house' Stage 1 assessments the assessment centre and the assessor structure a suitable timetable.

The Approved assessment centre is responsible for ensuring that a suitably experienced employee is available at the assessment to support the smooth running of the day. The assessment centre employee is responsible for briefing the BHS assessors appropriately regarding the horses involved in the assessment.

9. BHS Assessors

BHS Assessors are qualified, experienced equestrians. They hold a minimum of the BHSI qualification, or equivalent experience. They have a detailed understanding of horse welfare and the suitability of horse for the types of activities required during assessments.

Our assessors safeguard the horses during assessments and will continually monitor the behaviour, health, safety and welfare of the horses throughout the assessment. They are experienced equestrians who will be able to identify signs of stress or discomfort in horses and are responsible to act accordingly depending on the situation.

Assessors have responsibility to stop the assessment if health, safety and/or welfare of horses, riders or others is at risk during an assessment. Depending on the circumstance the candidate may not be permitted to continue with the assessment.

Assessors have a responsibility to report any concerns regarding horse health, safety and /or welfare to the BHS Education Team for further investigation or monitoring.

10. Candidates

Candidates are responsible for ensuring they understand the requirements and prepare effectively for the assessment they are taking. Candidates at Stage 2, 3 and 4 assessments are required to have a Skills Record signed off by an appropriate BHS Accredited Professional before they present for assessment. This ensures the candidate has received appropriate training for their assessment and have been confirmed as suitable to take their assessment and work with the types of horses they will be presented with.

All riders should be a suitable size, in terms of height and weight, for their horse. Candidates booking riding assessments are responsible for providing accurate information for their height and weight (including riding attire) at the time of booking. For horse safety and welfare, a booking may not be accepted if the candidate's weight exceeds the assessment centre's rider weight limit for their horses.

Candidates are responsible for bringing the correct equipment to their assessment as detailed in the dress guidelines for assessments. This includes the use of whips (from Stage 1 assessments) and spurs (from Stage 4 assessments). The use of incorrect equipment will not be permitted. The correct and sympathetic use of aids

(including artificial aids) is an integral part of the assessment criteria at all levels. Misuse of equipment is not permitted.

Candidates, and all accompanying persons, must treat any horse they work with or meet with respect and empathy. If this is not demonstrated at any point during the assessment, the assessor has the right to immediately stop the assessment. The candidate may be withdrawn from taking part in any remaining assessment that day. Assessment fees will not be refunded.

11. Fellowship

Horses may be privately owned and outsourced for a BHS Fellowship assessment. The responsibility for the suitability of the horses for the session/s required may be that of the candidate, assessment centre, assessors or the Fellowship Co-ordinator.

12. The assessment

To minimise the risk of transmitting infectious diseases, we advise assessors and candidates wear clean clothing and, wherever possible, disinfect footwear before attending a BHS assessment, particularly if you have been in contact with horses from outside the assessment centre.

Guidance is provided to our assessment centres regarding the number of horses required for different sections of the assessment. The assessment centre plans the allocation of horses for the timetable to ensure horses are not worked with for long periods of time and have suitable time for breaks in isolation from candidates.

Horses are matched to the appropriate level suitable for their temperament and fitness, ensuring they are handled and ridden by candidates at an appropriate level for them. If a horse is deemed to be unsuitable for any reason the assessor will request for the horse to be taken out from the assessment.

Risk assessments are completed on the day of the assessment. During an assessment, the assessor will continuously be risk aware, identifying any hazards or risks and mitigating where possible. Risk assessments include monitoring the health, safety and welfare of horses and others.

All horses will have correctly fitting tack and equipment. They will also wear suitable protective equipment for the designated work, for example boots for lungeing. There may be occasions when a horse may not wear specific equipment, for example if they are sensitive to wearing boots, which will be advised by the Approved assessment centre.

Horses under the age of four are not permitted for use in assessments at Stage 1 to BHSI level. Horses aged at 3 or above may be worked with at the Fellowship assessment. All horses that take part in assessments will be familiar with the types of activity they will participate in and the tack and equipment they will wear.

If it is suspected that a candidate's weight is in excess of the assessment centre's weight limit for riding activities, the assessment centre may request that the candidate be weighed. Candidates who are found to exceed their stated weight may be asked to withdraw from the assessment.

At any point during the assessment, if the assessor or assessment centre employee feels that horse health, safety and/or welfare is compromised, the assessor has the right to stop the assessment at any time.

For further information about our Guiding Principles [visit our website](#).



Our guiding principles for horse care and welfare

