

EQUESTRIAN

Definitions

The term **“group”** is used here to mean any group, society or association.

“Unit Commander” refers to the person responsible for and in charge of a formed body of mounted personnel. It also refers to whoever is put in charge of an unformed (for instance a living history scenario) body of mounted personnel.

“Equitation Organiser” means the person responsible to the group organising committee for the organisation and safety of horses at an event (May be called the Cavalry Co-ordinator or Master of Horse).

“Drill” refers to manoeuvres executed at the event as practiced in the period being re-created.

Group Responsibilities

The Group is responsible for all re-enactors taking part in an event in which the Group is the co-ordinating body. They are treated under current legislation as unpaid employees or voluntary workers. At such an event this means that the Group is responsible for all personnel acting on its behalf within the notified specified boundaries of the event, whether on the field, or elsewhere. This has repercussions on insurance, accreditation and safety procedures; in that all the re-enactors taking part must be placed under Group control and must adhere to these safety and accreditation procedures.

Commanders Responsibilities

Group Organisers and/or Unit Commanders are responsible for the health and safety, training, discipline, drill and conduct of all members of their unit. In accrediting a member of their unit they are certifying that the person has reached the standards laid out below and has read and understood the safety code of the Group.

Chain of Command

The chain of command in any organisation cascades down from the Commander or organiser through their staff, to the Unit Commanders and individuals. Thence the Unit Commander makes his own arrangements for internal command and control. If a disciplinary offence occurs then in the first instance this must be dealt with by the Unit Commander, then by the Group (or Army or Brigade Commander if appropriate). Regardless, if a matter of safety is involved then the Field Commander, the Group equitation organiser or the Group Safety Officer may intervene directly by ordering the person causing the offence off the field, to be dealt with later by the Group's disciplinary procedures. All riders, except mounted commanders should be a member of a properly constituted and recognised unit; this applies even for small groups with few horses as they will automatically become a “unit” for command, control, safety, discipline and insurance purposes.

Accreditations

It is very important not just for Command and Control purposes but also for safety reasons that proper training and accreditation is carried out. Accreditation of riders is

in the first instance the responsibility of Commanders of Units. Riders must have achieved the minimum standards laid out below. The Equitation Organiser is responsible for maintaining the accreditation records for all Mounted Units, and is responsible for the accreditation of mounted units attending an event. Any rider observed not to be safe on the field would in the first instance be dealt with by the chain of command and thereafter if necessary by the disciplinary procedures (see above). The accreditation record is to be updated annually and thereafter amended as and when new members are recruited.

Riding Standards

It is vital that the highest standards of authenticity, riding and safety are maintained. This will ensure that those who may ride at a show are competent in everything they are wearing, using and riding. All riders are expected to train regularly and sufficiently. The riding standard is a level which every rider should achieve, and should be maintained through training. It is not a test but can be used as such where necessary. Unit Commanders should keep a record of training, including that undertaken at events. The standard test is in two parts:

Part One

This part is applicable to all members of a unit and the member shall:

1. Produce their membership card for the Group, and demonstrate that he/she is fully aware of the responsibilities placed upon him/her by the groups rules vis a vis fellow members and the public.
2. Parade for Uniform (or clothing specific to the period being re-created) and Kit Inspection by his/her Group Organiser or Unit Commander and demonstrate that it is up to the standard required by the Unit, and/or the Group.
3. Demonstrate a thorough knowledge and understanding of the drill he/she will be required to perform and an understanding of the orders they may hear given in the language applicable to the Unit.
4. Understand the Campsite safety procedures.

Part Two

Riders are to be able to:

1. Walk, sitting trot, canter, gallop, with and without stirrups. Ride uphill and downhill.
2. Ride safely with main and as appropriate, secondary weapon.
3. Fit tack and adjust.
4. Prepare horse/daily horse welfare, Rug feed and water, and tether and secure.
5. Ride in formation/understand commands appropriate to the period and as used by the group.

After completing the basic competency assessment riders must demonstrate that they are competent in all actions, using any equipment that they may be required to as part of a specific display before the event (e.g. skill at arms, jumping, battlefield riding, etc.)

Riders should in theory and if possible in practice train on the horse they are to ride at the show on a regular basis and be thoroughly conversant with it before being seen in public. To turn up and ride at a show on a strange horse is not professional and a serious health and safety risk, but it is possible for a competent rider to produce a good performance on a horse with which they are not completely familiar. What is essential is that the rider/horse combination must be assessed to be both good and safe. If it was proved that prior to any given event little or no training had been undertaken by the rider on the horse that was being used at the event, any insurance for that event would most likely be declared null and void.

Weapon Safety Drills

If a horse becomes uncontrollable then the rider must ensure that his weapons are in a position so that they cannot cause injury to himself, the horse another re-enactor or the public. If this means dropping a weapon then it should be dropped flat - a weapon should never be thrown as it may bounce and cause injury. Thereafter the horse must be brought under control as quickly as possible and away from the public. An effective way is to ride in circles until the horse gets tired. Carbines must be clipped to the appropriate shoulder strap. Unit Commanders must ensure that all safety equipment, such as saddlery and tack is of a good standard and is well maintained. Their Group cannot be held to be liable for any claim where a failure of such equipment through negligence, unsatisfactory construction or the use of unsuitable materials is to blame for injury.

Weapon and Equipment Safety

All edged weapons used must be maintained in a clean and safe condition. Points and edges should be blunted and burrs removed, unless the weapon is used for a specific skills demonstration. Unit Commanders are to inspect weapons before any event or re-enactment. Edged weapons must be secured in a sheath or scabbard suitable for the weapon in question. Swords and Sabres may only be drawn on the command of an Officer or NCO and all equipment must be fitted properly to ensure safety both for the rider and the horse. No member of a unit may become involved in a melee or any combat unless they have been granted a Combat Safety Accreditation. All riders using firearms must pass the necessary Infantry Accreditation Tests.

Cavalry/Infantry

All riders must be aware of the safety distance of firearms and must not attack a unit which is loaded. Hand to hand combat is not permitted except with the prior agreement of the units involved. Pre planned scenarios are permitted and indeed should be encouraged. Infantry units should also be encouraged to familiarise themselves with the horses as confidence on the field will minimise the risk of injuries sustained from horses. They should be encouraged to visit the horse lines and be shown the various methods of dealing with horses by members of the Mounted Units. Cavalry must take especial care to avoid infantrymen lying on the ground, as casualties, even if this ruins a preplanned script.

Cavalry/Artillery

All riders must acquaint themselves with the system that shows whether a gun is loaded, suffering a hangfire etc., and be aware of the safety distances of cannon. In particular they must be careful when attacking a gun team to be sure that the gun is safe.

Emergency Action Drills

When an accident occurs not of a minor nature e.g. horse down with broken leg or rider down with crushed ribs, then the Commander of the unit involved, which may be an Officer or NCO will designate personnel to dismount and assist, and a person to alert the emergency services. The Commander will arrange for loose horses to be caught and riderless horses to be led away. Personnel are not to congregate around the injured rider/horse. Other units are to avoid the area and not get involved with the accident procedure. Accidents and incidents are to be reported to the Group Safety Officer and a format is attached.

Public Safety

Whilst it is obvious that public safety at events must be a paramount concern, riders must remember that they have an enormous potential for causing injury. Horses must never be ridden at a fast pace at the crowd and only at the walk when moving through the crowd. Always observe the barriers and if faced by an obstacle or defile with the public present do not cross if there is likely to be a risk. Barriers at the edge of a battlefield should be 2m apart.

Horse Security

Whilst in the charge of the rider, that rider is responsible for the security of the horse. This is especially important during rest breaks and when horses are tethered in unit lines. It is recommended that unit arrangements are made for security using the normal chain of command.

Contractors/Owner Riders

Contractors and owner riders are responsible for the safety and well being of their own horses. This includes security, which must be carried out in consultation with the organisers/sponsors. Contractors should also be subject to a formal contract or agreement and suggested formats are attached, in the form of a full contract or an "order form". All contractors or individuals, who are being paid to use their own horses at event, must have a licence. The licence is obtainable from the County Council where the horses are based and is outlined in The Animal Welfare Regulations 2018, 'Licensing of Activities Involving Animals'. This licence should be produced prior to the event. The horses may be subject to an inspection by the local County Council whose county the event is taking place in.

Horse Welfare

Riders are responsible for the horse they are riding. They must be heedful of any problems that become apparent, such as lameness, and if necessary return the horse to the grooms for treatment. Riders must never put the horse in danger.

Risk Assessments

A risk assessment form needs to be completed for each event and if necessary amended for each day and/or performance. Factors such as weather can affect the state of the ground and need to be taken into account as they change. If necessary horses should be withdrawn from a show when it is thought that safety is becoming an issue. For obvious reasons the sponsor and the horse supplier must be made aware not only of the situation as it progresses but also of the risk beforehand. Formats for risk assessment forms are attached. Part 1 is a general summary covering the whole event, Part 2 is a listing of further points to be considered and the Daily Risk assessment form notifies of changes that may occur on a day to day basis.

Use of Horses at Events

General

The use of horses at events adds a dimension that increases the attraction of the public to events by a significant factor. Therefore where it is possible and affordable sponsor's organisers and groups are going to use horses.

It is natural that for financial reasons sponsors and organisers will expect the horses they hire to give not only to the maximum effect but also the maximum use. This attitude can lead to overuse of the horses to the detriment of their welfare and to health and safety issues which affect the riders and the public. In addition such overuse leads to a denigration of the standards of re-enactment which we strive to achieve. Money must not be the driving force where horse use is concerned.

When groups directly hire in horses themselves this is less of a concern, but overuse of horses still can occur unless properly controlled by the group's equitation organiser.

Training

Every group should ensure that their equestrian training produces a standard that:

- ensures safety of the public and the safety of the riders.
- ensures that the horses are properly allocated and ridden to a standard that protects their well-being.
- produces an historically correct interpretation of the drill and tactics of the day (as reasonably possible).

The above is not always achieved, for a variety of reasons. Good horsemanship is a level of equitation that can only be achieved by study and constant practice. Unless this is achievable then groups should not put performances on in front of the public.

Should an incident occur involving horses where negligence is found to be the cause, then it is likely that not only will the rider be deemed to be at fault but also the unit commander, the group's executive and the sponsor/organiser of the event. This would have serious insurance implications. (I.e. show organiser, the societies concerned, individuals, providers of horses be they private or commercial).

Standards

The minimum standards recommended are shown above, which applies equally to groups using few horses and owner riders. It is the responsibility of the unit commanders and hence the groups using horses to ensure that these guidelines are followed and understood by the riders. All riders should invest a considerable amount of time, effort and money into maintaining and improving their horsemanship. It is not enough simply to buy all of the equipment.

It is the responsibility of the contractors and the owner riders to ensure that the horses brought to an event are suitable for that event, that they are trained to a standard commensurate with the work to be done and are in a fit condition. For instance it is not acceptable to bring to an event where explosives are to be used a horse that has not been trained with explosives.

It is the responsibility of the group equestrian organiser and/or unit commanders to ensure that the riders in the unit are able to safely handle the horses allocated, to ensure that the horses are not overworked and that they are properly cared for whilst in their charge.

Tack

Riders should endeavour to purchase and use tack that is historically correct for the period they are portraying within the limitations of what is safe, humane and available. (There is nothing worse than seeing rubber grip reins and fluffy nosebands used at a re-enactment event). However it is essential that saddles fit correctly and that horses are not over or under bitted. If in doubt riders should seek the advice of a trained saddler/instructor or where hired, the contractor who should be aware of the horse's limitations. All riders should practice with their tack beforehand.

Horse Usage and Care

It is not good practice for one set of horses to be used by more than one group and/or riders at an event. Inevitably the welfare of the horse suffers and the lines of responsibility become blurred. Horses must not be overused at events as this leads to:

- Sponsors/organisers requiring groups to perform battles and shows that are beyond the capabilities of the units and the horses. This can lead to exhaustion and early signs of disease and even death amongst the horses.
- Bad planning in the use of horses for the various tasks to be undertaken, in that horses may be allocated for battles and drills consecutively without rest. This problem is exacerbated where battles and drills are programmed too close to each other in time without leaving room for a proper handover or tack change, and for rest. In addition the standard of the show itself will suffer as the cavalry units will not be ready or properly practiced for the show.

Ideally horses should not be used for more than 4 hours in a day. This time should include:

- a period for fitting and adjusting tack. This must be done in consultation with the horse provider to ensure that horses are not over or under bitted and that saddles fit.
- drills to include familiarisation between the horse and rider and time to move riders between horses as appropriate.
- one or two 40 minute maximum battles/shows or three 30 minute shows.

Between the drills and the battles/shows there should be at least 1 hours rest and between battles/shows at least 1 hours rest. If funds do not allow such time planning then the event must be downsized to reach this goal.

These timings can be adjusted (for instance one drill session in the morning and a longer battle or show later). The group organiser is responsible for ensuring that the horses are not overworked and if appropriate should liaise with the contractor accordingly.

The maximum use of the horse is dependent upon a number of factors. These include fitness, condition, age, temperature, weather and whether the horses are shod (unshod horses cannot do the same amount or type of work as shod horses). The guidance given above must therefore be modified dependent upon which of these factors apply. The horse contractor/owner rider is the final arbiter of what can or cannot be done within these parameters.

Veterinary care should be available as required and the sponsor/organiser should provide a contact list of local vets available to the group equestrian organiser who can contact them beforehand to ensure their suitability to treat equine related incidents.

Contractors, Owner Riders and Units should bring horse first aid kits. Horse screens should be obtained by Units or Groups and brought in case of a serious injury or death of a horse on the field; these can be made easily and cheaply and are essential should a horse die on the field in front of the public (see attachment). Horses which have been in recent contact with infected animals must not be brought to events; where doubt exists veterinary advice should be obtained. Unit Commanders should walk the battlefield or show area to ensure that the ground is suitable for the deployment of horses, and that bad areas, such as holes) are marked off or made "off limits".

Owner Riders must bring their Horse Passports with them to prove not only ownership but also that the horse's vaccinations are up to date.

Horse Lines and Grazing

Sufficient space must be allocated by the sponsor/organiser to allow the horses to properly graze whilst resting. A rule of thumb is to allow 1/6 acre/horse/weekend. If grass is sparse then hay should be provided, but any particular requirements of either the contractor or the owner/rider will remain the responsibility of those persons. Sponsors/Organisers, Unit Commanders and Riders must be aware of what plants and trees are poisonous, and grazing containing these must be avoided or

cleared of such weeds. Ragwort is a perfect example of a prevalent weed, deadly poisonous to horses but which is allowed to flourish. Grass must not be cut and left on the ground as this can cause colic.

When horses are paddocked for longer than a few hours the paddock is spoiled by dung. Regiments must clear this dung as often as is necessary but at least twice daily in the early morning and evening. The dung should either be placed in receptacles if these are provided by the sponsor, or scattered along hedge or tree lines. Sufficient space should be allowed between contractor's horse paddocks to ensure that horses are unable to make contact. A double fence is recommended, the distance between to be at least 10 yards.

Hard standing or good solid ground should be provided for the transporting vehicles adjacent to the paddocks. Whilst the contractor is responsible for security in terms of electric fencing, etc., it is incumbent upon the sponsor/organiser to provide a suitable area. Water needs to be immediately available, either from troughs or taps. Where hosepipes are required these should be provided by the sponsor/organiser, unless otherwise agreed well beforehand.

Horse lines in camp should be of such a size to allow the public to visit without danger from restive horses that may kick or bite. The cavalry unit setting up the horse line is responsible for health and safety at the horse line.

Public Interaction

Arrangements must be made to ensure that the public are not put at risk when horses are moved between locations within a showground or the event area. It is recommended that dedicated secure horse pathways be put in place, with crossing points controlled by stewards. Where re-enactors are marching to or from the field care should be taken to minimise any risk to the public and to other re-enactors. There should always be a fence between horses and the public whatever they are doing, including that at the edge of the field/show area.

Where possible, the public should not be allowed near to the horse paddocks. Where electric fencing is used suitable signs should be mounted to warn of the electrified fence.

A list of questions that have been asked by the public and a suggested response is attached.

Annexes

Annexes 1 to 6 are word documents, so you can edit them as required. Annexes 7 and 8 are pdf files. Please click on the annex to view it.

1. Equestrian Risk Assessment Form Part 1
2. Equestrian Risk Assessment Form Part 2
3. Daily Risk Assessment Report Form
4. Order Form for the Supply of Horses
5. Contract of Horse Hire
6. Equestrian Incident Report Form

7. To Make a Horse Screen
8. Frequently Asked Questions – A Guide
9. Animal Welfare Regulations 2018

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