

Mounted police standards

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Chief constables have a legal responsibility to maintain the welfare of their animals under the [Animal Welfare Act 2006](#). Officers and staff who are responsible for a horse on a permanent or temporary basis are also under this legal obligation. They should understand the horse's specific welfare needs, health requirements and experience level. They should also possess the knowledge and skills to provide appropriate care.

Standards of care

Police forces, horse owners, officers and staff who are responsible for a horse must abide by the following:

- National Equine Welfare Council (NEWC) – [Equine Industry Welfare Guidelines Compendium for Horses, Ponies and Donkeys](#)
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) – [Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses, Ponies, Donkeys and Their Hybrids](#) (applicable to England)
- Welsh Government – [Code of Practice](#) for the Welfare of Horses (applicable to Wales)

These documents outline the mandatory requirements for addressing the full range of welfare concerns, including:

- providing a suitable environment for horses
- providing a suitable diet for horses
- providing safe and stress-free transportation, using adequate facilities and recommended transport times
- addressing the behavioural needs of horses, training, how to avoid fear associations and appropriate use of restraint
- planning for euthanasia

The NEWC guidelines detail the legal responsibility under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and provide guidance on how keepers should meet the needs of their animals.

Under the [Farriers \(Registration\) \(Amendment\) Act 1977](#) and [Farriers \(Registration\) Act 2017](#), forces must ensure that all police horses are shod by an accredited farrier to ensure that hooves are:

- maintained
- trimmed
- undamaged
- kept in good health and shape

Forces must ensure that they use veterinarians who are registered with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. Treatment must follow the [Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966](#). Forces should arrange for horses to have their teeth examined annually by an equine dental technician or a member of the Royal Veterinary College. They should also ensure that any treatment required is provided by a qualified person.

Standards of housing and transportation

Forces must ensure that horses are provided with a suitable place to live and are transported appropriately, as set out in the DEFRA and Welsh Government code of practices.

Forces must consider and plan for fire risks, as set out in [The Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#) and [Part 3 of the Fire \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#). Business continuity plans for dealing with emergencies should be followed and maintained with each force. Fire prevention officers or local fire services can provide advice on any additional fire precautions required. Forces should have bespoke evacuation plans for all sites in place.

Forces must ensure that all their horses have a valid horse passport and are microchipped under:

- [The Equine Identification \(England\) Regulations 2018](#)
- [The Equine Identification \(Wales\) Regulations 2019](#)
- [The Equine Animal \(Identification\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2019](#)

Forces must be able to provide access to valid horse passports for inspection, should they be required, within three hours.

Horse purchase, retirement, sale and euthanasia

Police forces should have a force policy that includes the purchase, retirement, sale and euthanasia of a police horse.

Further advice and information can be found in the [mounted policing standard operating procedure](#) on Knowledge Hub (you will need to sign in).

Purchase

Horses may be purchased from any private seller deemed suitable by the individual mounted unit. The purchase price of a horse should be agreed by the individual force according to its needs and budgetary constraints. Prior to purchase, a horse should be trialled for a minimum period of two weeks to assess its aptitude. The horse should be inspected and ridden by a National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) trained officer, intermediate rider or horse trainer to assess suitability to be trialled. A veterinary inspection of at least [stage two vetting](#) will be required prior to purchasing the horse. This vetting may take place before or after the trial, depending on individual force policy. After this time, the police force can purchase the horse from the legal owner. It is then classified as a remount.

Force mounted managers should arrange for each horse to undergo an initial training period at the training establishment. This may last several weeks, with the exact duration depending on the horse's individual aptitude and adaptability. The horse should then go out to a duty stable where it will continue its training. After approximately 12 to 18 months, force mounted units will give the horse operational status and can be deployed to any policing event where horses are used. The length of time will depend on the unique behaviour of the individual horse.

Retirement

Forces should agree and document a suitable exit policy for their horses, taking all welfare factors into account, such as age, physical needs and the range of options available.

The decision to retire a police horse should be made by the mounted management team. Forces should consider the best available options when retiring a horse and should do so in accordance with their local policy.

Horses should be prepared for their new home by the relevant mounted branch units. They can be retired via means of a charitable trust or a private home. To retire a horse, the management team

must be satisfied that the horse's welfare needs will be met, and that any conditions will be followed.

Potential carers should be made fully aware of the horse's history and should be prepared to take the horse under the conditions of retirement laid down by the force.

Sale

Horses unable to perform operational duties due to behavioural, temperamental or physical reasons can be considered for sale by the mounted management team. Once sold, the horse is no longer the responsibility of the police force.

Euthanasia

Euthanasia of police horses should be considered if the horse:

- has a history of chronic disease, illness or lameness that has deteriorated to a level where, according to a qualified veterinarian, intervention or care can no longer sustain a good quality of life
- suffers serious trauma in the line of duty where euthanasia may be required at the site

Provisions for dealing with horses' welfare in an emergency situation, as well as easing suffering and preventing distress, are covered in the following:

- [Animal Welfare Act 2006](#)
- [Animal Health and Welfare \(Scotland\) Act 2006](#)
- [British Horse Society \(BHS\) webpage on Euthanasia](#)

Only qualified veterinarians or licensed individuals should usually authorise and perform the euthanasia of a horse. Go to the [Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons euthanasia of animals](#) for more information.

Tags

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