

# EUROPEAN HORSE NETWORK

32 organisations active in all  
Equine-related activities

EFSA Stakeholder meeting  
on the protection of  
Equidae



*Mark Wentein*

Chairman of the European Horse Network



# The Equine industry in Europe

- 9,2 million equidae\*, used for a wide variety of purposes
- Provides employment to more than 800,000 people across the EU
- Is worth over €100 billion per annum
- Uses at least 2.6 million hectares of land in the EU



*Figures established in 2010 by EHN and in 2015 in "Removing the Blinkers" Equine Health and Welfare report by WHW and Eurogroup for Animals*

*\*FEI survey update in 2023*

***Eurostat is not producing any equine figures since 1996***

# Call for Data

Correct information about the exact number of Equidae in EU is urgently needed.

Without the needed data it is difficult to plan  
Or to undertake action!

## Needed data about:

- Number of:
  - all equidae
- Breeding mares
- Sport horses (per discipline?)
- Recreational horses
- Slaughter horses
- Excluded horses for food chain



EUROPEAN  
STATISTICAL  
SYSTEM



# General Principles

- ✓ Equidae are agricultural animals kept for a variety of purposes, such as - but not only- sport, racing, leisure, tourism, breeding, therapy, and meat production.
- ✓ All Equidae are susceptible to change their categories several times during their lifetime.
- ✓ Requirements detailed in all upcoming legislation should take into account this diversity. (= status)

# Needs according to principles

Equidae within the Union are protected according to the five freedoms recognised by the World Organisation for Animal Health:

- the freedom of hunger, malnutrition and thirst
- freedom of fear and distress
- freedom from heat stress or physical discomfort
- freedom from pain, injury and disease
- freedom to express normal patterns of behavior



EUROPEAN  
STATISTICAL  
SYSTEM

## Needs

Agriculture statistics and knowledge at EU level are necessary to clarify the needs

**Clarify definitions** of farmers, breeders, keepers, owners, users, ... in order to apply responsibilities accordingly

**Further research** on horse welfare are needed and should include animals' needs related to these Five Domains in requirements on keeping, housing and transport, use, ...

**Funding needed** to adapt the farms and training of keepers



# Horses part of agriculture

Horsebreeding starts with agriculture in the rural landscape

More than 2,6 millions of ha used in EU

For grazing, feeding, training, riding, hay production, free turnout, disposal and recycling of manure



## EHN position on future EU legislation on animal welfare - Equidae welfare rules

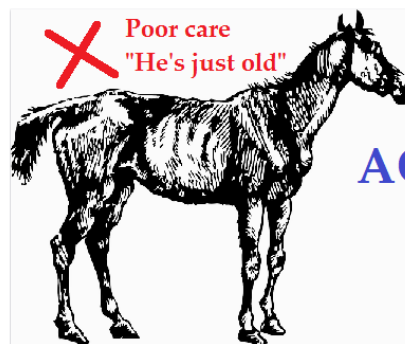
### **Some elements included in EHN position:**

- Equidae should have free and permanent access to clean and fresh water.
- No Equidae should stay without eating for more than four hours regarding the negative impact it has on horse health (i.e., continuous production of acid in the stomach).
- Whenever possible, horse keepers should allow contact (physical or visual) with other Equidae. Horses are “social” herd-animals.
- Equidae should be exercised or be able to move freely every day to express their natural behavior.
- People who are in charge of the keeping, use, handling or training of horses should have appropriate equine-specific knowledge, education, experience and skills. **LICENSE TO OPERATE!**
- Responsible breeding and ownership from birth to death to try to ensure that no horse ends up in a position where its welfare is compromised.

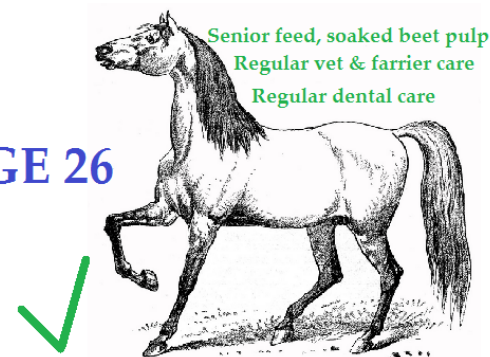
# Take care of your old horse



## Old Horses Don't Have to Look Thin



AGE 26



**PROPER CARE KEEPS THEM FIT!**



# EXCLUSION OF THE FOOD CHAIN?

In BEL more than 50 % of all horses are excluded from the foodchain.

End of life of these horses?

> Neglected; Abandonned;  
not taken care off;

- Welfare issues!
- All must be cremated
- Ca. 850- 1000 € cost for the last owner.

Even World Horse Welfare considers slaughtering a fair way as end of life.

Under controlled EU-vet regulations and procedures.

Reintroduction? After a prescribed format.



# End of life

Equines play many different roles in society as they are perhaps one of the most versatile animals – from athletes to meat production, from pets to a source of transport or use in agriculture, forestry, tourism.

This diversity may lead to severe problems when seeking legislative protection since equines do not fit neatly into modern legislation and policy making, and they can easily fall into gaps between laws drafted for companion animals and agricultural animals, often leading to welfare detriment.

Unlike most agricultural livestock, many equines are bred for purposes other than for human consumption but can end up being slaughtered for meat.

Essential substances that are not listed on the EU rules (Regulation (EU) No 1950/2006 and Regulation (EU) No 37/2010) cannot be administered to an animal intended for human consumption.

# End of life

Once an equine is administered with one of those prohibited substances, the equine is permanently excluded from the food chain. This permanent exclusion can lead to various welfare issues such as abandonment, neglect, illegal slaughter, etc.

A reintroduction in the status should be organised



# Reintroduction

This period, however, has to be performed under high standards so that the welfare and health of the equines is not put at risk.

As well, we believe it is essential for the EU to move towards an identification and registration fully digitalised system, which will have both health and welfare benefits as well as huge implications on food safety and human health, especially in terms of traceability of equines and transparency of the whole food chain.





# Working with horses keeps them fit





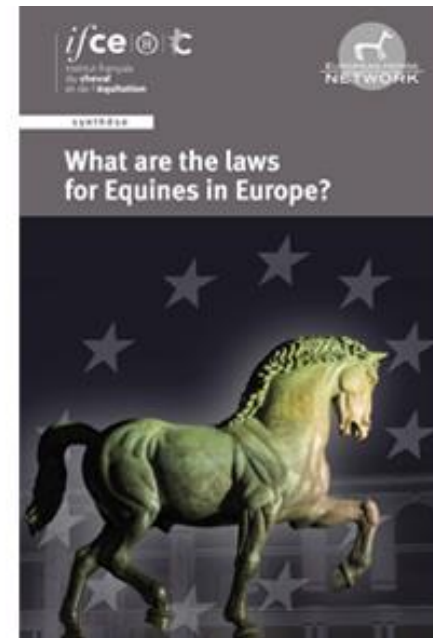
# Guidelines – Regulations



WorldHorseWelfare



- FEI Code of conduct**
- The Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI) requires all those involved in international equestrian sport to adhere to the FEI's Code of Conduct and to acknowledge and accept that at all times the welfare of the horse must be paramount and must never be subordinated to competitive or commercial influences.
  - At all stages during the preparation and training of competition horses, welfare must take precedence over all other demands. This includes good horse management, training methods, farriery and tack, and transportation.
  - Horses and competitors must be fit, competent and in good health before they are allowed to compete. This encompasses medication use, surgical procedures that threaten welfare or safety, pregnancy in mares and the misuse of aids.



# How to (re)act ?

## Proposals for EFSA

Reintroduction in the food chain

After waiting period of 6 months



All operators:

- Farmers
- Breeders
- Trainers
- Atletes
- Riders/drivers
- Horse owners
- Horse keepers
- ....
- **NEED A LICENSE TO OPERATE**

# Housing

Not only in boxes



Life stock and youngsters also  
in groups



Labeling of housing?



Housing must be safe and  
related to the horse's use  
and status

(stallions, sporthorses, mares with foals have  
other needs – living in groups is social for  
herd-animals)





# Free turnout - professional monitoring

Free group turnout in populations with high turnover will actually lead to more injuries and lower welfare.

constant access to forage health/welfare of horses just before a competition or risk for obesity.

daily exercise for sports/race horses as an alternative to free turnout.



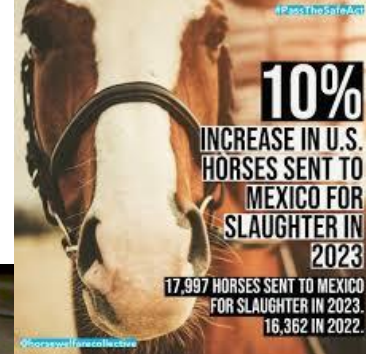
# Transport

## A horse is a horse? Is it?

Not in transport – Depending on the status: Different needs, regulations and administration.

Slaughter horses > by preference only regional - No long distance travelling  
Better to transport the carcasses.

Sport horses > stricter regulations and border controls with vets – even travel intercontinental. Time slots of max 8 hours is often not realistic





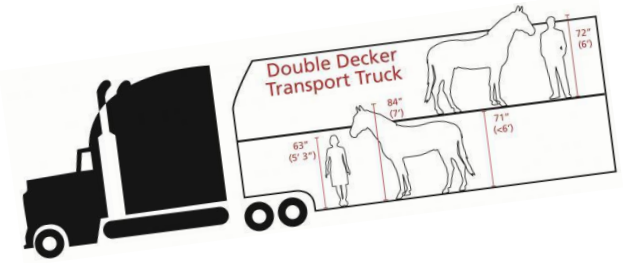


# Transport

Regional transport for breeding, leisure, recreation, not crossing the borders > other consequences and less rules and administration. Keep this simple!

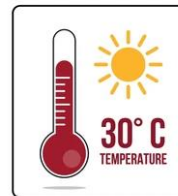


# Transport



No double deck transport trucks for horses – pony's could be allowed

Stalls in the truck for keeping balance during transport, except for foals.



Sufficient Ventilation and water supply instead of a transport stop over 30° C.

(Then South of Europ could not transport any more equidae for almost 6 months a year)







# Transport

Education, information of  
drivers and handlers

License to operate?

Modern applications and  
labeling of safe and  
approved horse boxes,  
trailers,...



# The sector already (re)acts proactive



**The social licence to operate:  
A future focus on horse welfare and sustainability.**

**Julie Fiedler**

Professor Josh Slater, Drs Sarah Rosanowski, Margaret Ayre

**Equestrian Australia  
Health, Safety and Welfare  
Online Conference  
10, 12 and 17 July 2023**





# Some relevant solutions

Re-establish EU Agriculture statistics on all equidae

Harmonisation of diplomas on the different uses of equines

Create a detention/keeping certificate for owners and keepers and their facilities

Look at end-of life options in a correct, economic and scientific way for horse welfare (reintroduction?)

**LICENSE TO OPERATE?**





# EHN Manifesto 2024



## THE EQUINE INDUSTRY IN EUROPE

- 100+ billion euros a year economic impact
- 400 000 full time equivalent jobs provided by the sector
- 6 million or more horses in Europe
- 6 million hectares of permanent grassland given over to horse grazing
- Global leader in hosting Equestrian competitions, in horseracing and breeding

## WHAT WE STAND FOR

- Keeping equines is an agricultural activity and enhance its green assets
- The equine sector features rural, young and feminised employment, where jobs combine passion, female leadership and physical and mental health benefits,
- Humans enjoy an extraordinary relationship with equids, which can answer to the needs of society (health, inclusion, sport for all, including for people with disabilities),
- Equine Welfare, from breeding to end of life, is at the centre of our activities,
- Equestrianism and horses are part of the European cultural identity, with state studs and national equestrian schools across the EU
- Equestrian tourism is an exemplar of 'slow tourism' respecting biodiversity.
- In many equine sectors, such as horseracing and breeding, Europe is preeminent,



## OUR NEEDS

- Help the European equine sector by restoring coherence between the animal welfare strategy (transport and kept animals regulations), the Animal Health Law (including Equine identification and registration rules) and the trade policy;
- Respect the specific Status for equine animals in Europe - Equine animals are agricultural animals and need updated and reliable European statistics;
- Supporting and providing funding to address research gaps in our knowledge/understanding of equines (including behaviour) that will improve equine welfare;
- Support the dissemination of information on equine matters that is evidence-based;
- Defend the promotion of Good Employment throughout the industry;
- Support European projects on innovation, integrity, culture, training and employment to propose new tools and objective results and data.





# INFORMATION



All minutes, thematic leaflets,  
press releases, position  
papers and Newsletters are  
posted on the EHN website



[https://www.youtube.com/@  
EuropeanHorseNetwork](https://www.youtube.com/@EuropeanHorseNetwork)

@euhorsenetwork



[www.europeanhorsenetwork.eu](http://www.europeanhorsenetwork.eu)



**Thank you for your attention!**



**Questions?**

**Training/education/license to operate is a necessity –  
Learned young is done old –  
passing on knowledge from one generation to the next**