

EVENT MEDIA PACK

National launch of the Equine Health and Welfare Strategy

Lee Valley riding centre, Leyton, London

Wednesday 23rd May 2007

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About today's event

- Today, hundreds of schoolchildren are joining VIPs to launch the 10 year **Equine Health and Welfare Strategy**
- They are also learning about the importance of correct nutrition and exercise for horses – valuable skills they can use to improve their own lives

About the venue

- Lee Valley riding centre was chosen as the launch venue because of its commitment to quality, and making horses accessible to the entire community.
- This urban riding centre in the heart of east London is the first equestrian centre in the UK to have been awarded the prestigious QUEST award for quality. It is also a 'green' riding centre, with solar panels, recycled bedding and a waste compactor to name a few environmentally friendly initiatives.
- In addition to Riding for the Disabled sessions, Lee Valley Pony Club enables youngsters to 'own' a pony for a day and compete at shows. The Riding Centre's 17 horses and 15 ponies have been carefully selected to be safe and sensible and its show jumps, cross country courses and indoor and outdoor floodlit arenas cater for any standard of rider.

About the strategy

- The strategy is a unique document jointly put together by more than 20 key organisations, including the ILPH, British Equine Veterinary Association and key government departments
- They are aiming to achieve a single vision for horse health and welfare in Great Britain.
- The organisations who worked on the strategy include:
 - DEFRA
 - Scottish Executive SEERAD
 - National Assembly for Wales
 - British Equine Veterinary Association
 - RSPCA
 - National Equine Welfare Council
 - ILPH
 - British Horse Industry Confederation
 - British Equestrian Trade Association
 - Horseracing Regulatory Authority
 - The Horse Trust
 - The British Horse Society

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- National Equine Database
 - Redwings Horse Sanctuary
 - The Donkey Sanctuary
 - British Equestrian Federation
 - Brooke
 - Hospital for Animals
 - British Dressage
 - The British Horseracing Board
 - British Eventing
 - British Show Jumping
 - Horserace Betting Levy Board
- The vision for horse health and welfare is:
 1. All horses are healthy and are treated humanely.
 2. Everyone responsible for horse health and welfare fulfils their duty of care.

To enable this:
 3. Owners, keepers, users and others concerned with horse health and welfare must understand their responsibilities, know how to meet them and take steps to do so.
 4. Everybody involved with horses, including Government, must collectively ensure that:
 - a. Health and welfare standards, and other information necessary to support each individual's duty of care, are appropriate, up to date and accessible.
 - b. The risks of infectious diseases, including those entering Britain from abroad, are prevented or managed effectively.
 - c. The health and welfare status of the horse population is adequately monitored.
 - d. Significant health and welfare problems are identified and addressed.
- The eight key aims of the strategy are:
 - AIM 1: To Review Equine Health Standards & Welfare Standards – Collate available information and identify potential gaps to improve these standards.
 - AIM 2: Health Surveillance Arrangements – Investigate procedures, contingency plans and control measures. Assess emerging threats. Non infectious disease, such as lameness, to be included.
 - AIM 3: Equine Welfare Observation Arrangements – Review methods of identifying welfare concerns and consolidate reporting procedures.
 - AIM 4: Methods of Equine Identification – Examine preferred techniques and encourage industry-wide take-up and Government support.
 - AIM 5: Medicine Needs and Availability – Determine current and future medicine needs and recommend how best to meet them.

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- AIM 6: Education, Skills and Training – Assess current quality and availability of educational material and qualifications. Address omissions and accessibility.
- AIM 7: Review Research Requirements – Co-ordinate current and future research to enable best use of available funds.
- AIM 8: Oversee and Review the Strategy – Ensure strategy is implemented, monitor effectiveness and review content over next 10 years.

Quotes from VIPs

- **Frankie Dettori** said: “Unfortunately I am unexpectedly unable to attend the launch, but I am delighted to support and endorse this strategy. It is a major step forward to see so many organisations work together for the good of horses in the UK.

“The health and welfare of horses should be a main priority for every part of the industry that relies on them. This strategy is going to be key to that in the next decade.

“I’m delighted to know so many children learned so much about horses. It’s great to know the next generation of youngsters are being introduced to horses and given opportunities to learn and ride at such a young age. Who knows, maybe one child will be inspired by the event and go on to be a famous jockey in the future”.

- **Barry Gardiner MP, the government Minister for the horse**, said: “The strategy will provide vital guidance to horse owners for the next decade. My department, Defra, has been pleased to be a partner in this industry-led initiative. The strategy will help us to improve disease surveillance, and help us to prioritise resources for tackling these diseases.

“BETA estimates that there are over a million horses in this country, looked after by nearly three quarters of a million people. We want to encourage these people to adopt the new Equine Health and Welfare Strategy and make it a part of their everyday actions.”

- **Josh Slater, president of the British Equine Veterinary Association**, said: “The strategy is a highly important equine welfare initiative which BEVA has strongly supported from the beginning and is proud to be associated with. The interactive launch is a key event to raise public awareness of the strategy and help horse owners understand their responsibilities and what is meant by 'duty of care'.

“BEVA will be working with the industry to provide public education about the responsibilities of horse ownership and we have already started work on the two specific areas of the strategy, disease surveillance and medicines, for which we are responsible.”

- **Desi Dillingham, the founder chairman of British Dressage and a director of the British Horse Foundation**, said: “The horse industry is vibrant and exciting, and gives work and pleasure to thousands of people across the country. This strategy gives me huge confidence that it will develop and grow in the right way over the next decade.

“I cannot emphasise strongly enough how important it is that so many organisations are willing to work together, for the good of the horse.”

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- **Lesley Barwise-Munro**, past president of the British Equine Veterinary Association and honorary vice president of the National Equine Welfare Council, said: "The strategy, which does not form part of the new Animal Welfare Act 2006, aims to achieve high standards of health and welfare for all horses in Britain, whatever their breed, type or usage. I would like to thank all the people and organisations that have enabled this event to take place and I look forward to seeing this strategy unfold over the coming years.

"It will make a real difference to the health and welfare of Great Britain's horse population, from children's riding ponies through to top level competition horses. To see so many children at the launch is right, as they will be the next generation of horse owners."

- **Irena Grint, manager of Lee Valley riding centre**, said: "It's widely acknowledged there is a problem with youth obesity. When children get involved in caring for horses, they learn a huge amount about how to keep the animal well fed and fit. That education process should help the child look at their own lifestyle, and make changes to be healthier."

"Caring for horses is a fun activity enjoyed by thousands of people across the UK. It's also clear it's now becoming an educational activity for children too."

Further information

- For further information, call press liaison Paul Green on 07936 712007, or email press@publicityheaven.com
- Photos are available for download from <http://www.equinehealthandwelfarestrategy.co.uk/media> You are welcome to publish these images in relation to this story
- More information is online at www.equinehealthandwelfarestrategy.co.uk and www.leevalleypark.org.uk

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