

NEWS RELEASE

Embargoed until 22nd March 2007 1030 hours

DEFRA Minister announced Equine Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain in inaugural speech to National Equine Forum

Today Barry Gardiner MP, Minister for the Horse Industry, announced the Equine Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain at the National Equine Forum in London. He said: *"The Equine Health and Welfare 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."*

The **Equine Health and Welfare Strategy** is a 10 year plan to ensure that:

- all horses, ponies & donkeys are as healthy as possible
- are treated humanely and that
- everyone responsible for equine health and welfare understands and fulfils their duty of care

Lesley Barwise Munro NEWC Vice President and Past President of British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) said:

"This is a tremendous opportunity for a united horse industry to show its commitment to horse health and welfare and therefore to the success of equine businesses. When the Animal Welfare Act 2006 becomes law on 6th April 2007, a 'duty of care' will be imposed on all animal owners and keepers. The industry is keen to ensure that everything possible is done to guarantee that all those involved with horses increase their knowledge of horse care and disease, implement regular veterinary health care checks and permanently identify their animals. In response the industries is committed to identifying areas where further advice or research is required and formulate plans with regard to such topics as equine medicines, welfare surveillance and health surveillance."

Notes to Editors:

1. The **Equine Health and Welfare Strategy** has been formulated by and will be monitored by the Equine Industry including the main welfare, veterinary and industry bodies; representatives of the professional sector including commercial breeders, affiliated sports, trainers and racing; the leisure oriented sectors including riding lessons and hacking, unaffiliated sports and tourist attractions, associated trades and businesses and government departments.
2. **6,000 printed copies** will be available for horse owners, equine colleges, welfare officers, veterinary practices, trading standards inspectors and police officers. A **PDF** download is available.
3. **100,000 copies** of the 'Pocket Guide' will be available for circulation.
4. The web site www.equinehealthandwelfarestrategy.co.uk will be launched on 22nd March 2007.
5. Talk direct to **Lesley Barwise Munro**: 07713 122 109
6. Other enquiries to Elaine Cannon, NEWC office: 01295 810060 / Mobile: 07918 084 359



- raising equine welfare standards for over 30 years -

President: Dr Harry Greenway

Vice Presidents:
Dr Elisabeth Svendsen MBE
Mrs Lesley Barwise-Munro BSc,
BVM&S, CertEP, MRCVS

Chairman: Martin Taggart

NEWS RELEASE SENT BY:

Name and Title:
Elaine Cannon
NEWC Executive Secretary

Address:
10 Wales Street, Kings Sutton,
Banbury, Oxon OX17 3RR

Direct Tel:
01295 810060

Direct Fax:
01295 810060

Mobile:
07918 084 359

Email:
secretary@newc.co.uk

ABOUT NEWC:

The National Equine Welfare Council is made up of 58 equine welfare organisations including Animal Health Trust, British Horse Society, Blue Cross, Donkey Sanctuary, The Horse Trust, International League for the Protection of Horses, National Pony Society, Redwings Horse Sanctuary & RSPCA.

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