

Guidance for horses and ponies in extreme weather

The Pony Club values its Horses and Ponies who take part in a variety of activities throughout the year and across the seasons along with varied weather.

As seasons change the needs of individual horses or pony involved in all elements of Pony Club activities should be considered. Recent years have seen more extremes of weather and Pony Club activities continue.

Extreme Cold Weather Guidance

During the Winter months, weather can vary significantly across the country and change quickly which can make planning Pony Club activities more challenging. To support attendees to our activity please consider

- Consider the venue booked during this time, can it provide refuge from the wind, rain and snow should it be a factor during your activity, this may be the time to consider the use of indoor arenas. This may also mean seeing if stables are available for attendees.
- Consider the activity being undertaken, is it suitable for the ground conditions? Is it icy or slippery and unsuitable for jumping or riding on roads for example
- Having additional measures in place to tackle icy roads, pathways and water points and venues could be a consideration to ensure there is minimal injury through slip and fall whilst also seeing water freely accessible.
- Provide horses and ponies additional time to warm up during colder months, this will help stretch muscles and loosen off the older horses or ponies whilst assisting in injury prevention.
- Take time to cool your horse following the session, be that training, rallies or competition. Cool the muscles through walk work and avoid feeding/ travel whilst the horse remains hot.
- Encourage members and families travelling to bring plenty of fodder (hay or haylage) to help fuel the horse or pony through its travel and whilst waiting for the session.
- Keep the horse or pony suitably dressed for travel, waiting at the venue and whilst riding. In some cases, this may mean bringing additional and supplementary rugs/ exercise sheets.
- The majority of horses and ponies have good fat cover and therefore have good natural insulation. If the pony is older, has had recent illness or dental issues it may be thin and therefore not be suitable for use in cold weather.
- Support the vaccination rule, much like in people illnesses can spike during the winter months, assess your horse before travelling and see if it is in line with the vaccination rule.

Extreme Heat Guidance

The last few years have seen increasingly hot and longer summer months during which the majority of activities are carried out due to the break in the school holidays. Weather needs to remain a consideration to risk assessment and event planning. Advice for those involved in the activities should include

- Ensuring horses and ponies always have access to a fresh supply of water either in the stable or whilst stationary from travel.
Encouraging drinking may be achieved by adding flavouring to the water supply if fresh and in a bucket, this could be mint or apple for example. These flavourings are to be added slowly, ensuring the horse is drinking before any additional is added.
- When in pens or turn out having more than one source of water may ensure health and limit upset in the herd to prevent resource guarding.
- Increasing the water intake in hot weather would support cooling of horses and ponies, this can be achieved through soaked feeds or hay nets (including steamed hay nets)
- Cooling your horse after exercise will support in maintaining health, this can be achieved through continuous application of water to the horse's body- vitally important after strenuous exercise.
- Consider the time of day when exercising the horse or pony and avoid the hottest points of the day- early morning and late evening are recommended,
- Some horses and ponies may benefit from adding electrolytes and salt to the diet to replenish what may have been lost in exercise, seek professional advice on this matter.
- When resting at camp, rallies and competitions seek shade through stabling or natural/man-made shelters to support cooling. This may also be thorough application of rugs and masks to limit contact with flies and sunlight.
- Where the skin is pink or lighter the application of sun cream may be necessary
- Be watchful for signs your horse or pony is struggling in the heat, if they show signs of the below seek help and support from professionals
 - o excessive sweating
 - o Heavy rapid breathing
 - o Increased/ elevated heart rate
 - o Increase respiration rates
 - o Very pale or dark gums
 - o Altered behaviour.

Thunder and lightning

When storms result in thunder and lightning it is advised that

- Horses and Ponies in lightning storms activities should stop, and shelter should be sought. E.g. if possible load the horse/ pony in the horse box/ trailer or return to the stables. Do not use an umbrella and handlers or riders should seek shelter too.
- If ridden or ground schooling work is underway, this should reduce to cooling and return to the normal routine. Thunder and lightning can frighten and/ or unsettle horses and ponies which may cause them to act out of character and be unpredictable
- Extra care is advised to be taken with horses and ponies at this time when handling or sharing spaces due to this type of weather unsettling them which may result in injury to both parties
- Should an injury occur to the horse or pony during the storm, where possible this could be treated as usual. If a more serious injury or illness is suspected then advice is to be sought from the vet.