

Dear All,

You may / may not be aware of the Social Licence to Operate which has become more of an issue over recent years. We are not immune from social opinion and all have a duty to uphold and maintain the standards that the wider public would expect of us.

Social Licence To Operate (SLO) - What does it mean?

Although the horse-human relationship is an ancient one, for it to thrive long-term, equestrianism needs to ensure it continues to have the approval and acceptance of wider society. When an activity does have society's approval or acceptance, it is said to have a 'social licence to operate' (SLO).

The equestrian world needs to maintain and strengthen its social licence for it to have a future. This means that the welfare of the horse must be put first AND be seen to be put first, all of the time, and it is the responsibility of everyone who is involved with horses to demonstrate this.

Sometimes, mistakes will be made. However, if all those involved in horse sport and leisure can learn from these mistakes and demonstrate that they are always striving to do right by their horses, wider society is more likely to trust that equine welfare is genuinely being put first and it is more likely that equestrianism's social licence will be maintained.

Pony Club HQ explains SLO in the following way:

"Like many sports, activities, and industries, equestrianism will only be able to flourish if it retains the acceptance of the general public. Activities that are accepted are said to have a 'social licence to operate'.

There is growing concern, both within the equestrian world and outside it, about the use and potential abuse of horses, ponies, and donkeys which, unchecked, threatens our sport.

All within The Pony Club must respect this reality and show that they always take their responsibility for the welfare and care of their animals seriously.

Fundamental to this is an understanding of our animals, their behavioural traits, and their comforts and discomforts, as well as the points of view of non-horse-users in society."

What does SLO mean to CHPC?

At CHPC we are trying to follow best practice and move forward with updated policies on horse welfare.

New policies have been put in place by the Pony Club and these policies are in line with all other equestrian governing bodies.

The Pony Club Welfare Policy can be accessed by the following link, it's an interesting read: <https://pcuk.org/media/xq4frp3a/pony-club-welfare-policy.pdf>

With this in mind, we are trying as a club, to move forward with the recommendations set out for whips and spurs.

We are not levelling any accusations, merely bringing CHPC in line with PCUK and other Equestrian bodies best practice. We kindly request that you read, support and comply with the below regarding whips and spurs.

Whips:

Please see the specific whip rules for your discipline using the online rule book for the most up to date rules regarding type and length.

As you will all know one of the most recent changes is the use of a padded short whip for jumping.

Please make yourself familiar with the rules regarding the use of the whip and not just the type.

Whips must never be used in anger.

If we see a whip used inappropriately or in a manner that might compromise a horse or pony's welfare, we reserve the right to ask you to remove it.

Spurs:

These are also in the public eye and are likely to be next under greater scrutiny.

Spur rules at competition are clearly outlined in the rule books regarding the type and the way they should be used.

It's widely agreed that the rider needs to be able to DEMONSTRATE a secure lower leg in order to use spurs effectively and safely. An understanding of the correct way to apply aids whilst wearing spurs, is insufficient.

We reserve the right to ask a member to remove spurs should we see them used inappropriately, where we see a lack skill required for their effective use, or in a

manner that might compromise a horse or pony's welfare. Please consider their appropriateness before wearing.

To conclude:

The Pony Club tests have been updated to reflect the new direction towards welfare. We hope that members will embrace this a positive step for their ponies.

The link to new tests can be found for free on the Pony Club website <https://pcuk.org/members/training/pony-club-tests/>

As a club, we need to be absolutely aware of the reality that any inappropriate behaviour could be filmed and make its way into the public domain.

CHPC is a wonderful club and we are incredibly proud of all of our members. We have a duty to maintain the integrity of the equestrian community and ensure that we uphold its good name.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email and we look forward to seeing you at forthcoming training and rallies.

Best wishes,
Emily and Frances.