

Equine community welcomes shelving of 'Horse Tax' and new Government-industry partnership to protect horses from disease

England's equine sector has today welcomed the publication of forward-thinking proposals that throw out previous plans to create a costly 'animal health' quango and charge horse owners a yearly disease control tax on every one of the million-plus horses in the country.

Instead the equine industry will be at the heart of a new partnership approach with Government, set to transform how decisions on animal disease and welfare are taken.

The British Horse Industry Confederation (BHIC), chaired by British Horseracing Authority (BHA) (and comprising the BHA, British Equestrian Federation, Thoroughbred Breeders Association, British Horse Society, British Equine Veterinary Association and British Equestrian Trade Association), has been at the forefront of the development of the proposals.

Set out in a report published today by the Advisory Group on Responsibility and Cost Sharing, the proposals include plans to establish a unique new 'England Partnership Board' within the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). If implemented by Ministers, the new Board would see responsibility for decisions on animal health and welfare fully shared between Government, industry and animal owners.

Whilst giving its firm backing to the recommendations, the BHIC has called on Defra Ministers to ensure that the equine sector, which has a combined economic impact of £7bn (50% of which derives from racing), is well represented on the new Board.

The horse equine sector strongly opposed the original proposals for a 'Horse Tax' on the grounds that it would have raised costs, produced no benefits, and failed to recognise what was already being done. Today's report makes it clear that the Advisory Group has rejected this option, proposing instead a solution that will see industry and Government working together in genuine partnership to develop a system of fair and efficient cost sharing.

Professor Tim Morris, Chair of the BHIC, said:

"We all know that disease is a constant risk to horses. But a hugely expensive and bureaucratic 'animal health' quango and a tax on every horse owner was not the way to reduce those risks.

"Through the BHIC the whole equine sector came together and worked as one voice to both oppose the original untenable proposals and come up with constructive alternatives. Indeed, the ideas for a small Board within Government, better use of insurance and a review of compensation were all championed by the sector.

"We're confident that the proposals set out today represent the best way forward on Responsibility and Cost Sharing and the sector looks forward to continuing to engage with Ministers on vitally important issues such as the spread of equine disease."

Rosemary Radcliffe, the chair of the RCS Advisory Group said:

"The very diverse equine sector, with good leadership and a willingness to work together, engaged very constructively in these important discussions. Such a cooperative approach bodes well for the partnership which we are proposing as the way forward."

Notes to editors:

1. Further information regarding the Advisory Group on Responsibility and Cost Sharing (RCS) is available [here](#). A copy of the Group's report can be downloaded from this location
2. The proposals apply to England only. Similar discussions are underway in Scotland, and working with BHS Scotland the BHIC has given evidence to the Scottish Government.

Cont....

British Horse Industry Confederation

3. The equine sector is represented on the RCS Advisory Group in a personal capacity by Professor Tim Morris, who is Chair of the British Horse Industry Confederation (BHIC) and Director of Equine Science and Welfare at the British Horseracing Authority (BHA).
4. The British Horse Industry Confederation ([BHIC](#)) represents the UK's diverse equine sector, and brings together the following organisations to speak with one voice to Government and wider stakeholders:
 - British Horseracing Authority ([BHA](#))
 - The British Equestrian Federation ([BEF](#))
 - Thoroughbred Breeders' Association ([TBA](#))
 - British Horse Society ([BHS](#))
 - The British Equestrian Trade Association ([BETA](#))
 - The British Equine Veterinary Association ([BEVA](#))
5. A summary of the size and impact of the equine sector is available [here](#)
6. Responsibility and Cost Sharing Timeline:
 - **July 2009:** Defra consults with animal owners on proposals for a new Animal Health 'quango' and the introduction of a new yearly charge, per animal, for every farm livestock animal and horse owned in the UK. The equine sector [firmly rejects the proposals](#).
 - **September 2009:** The equine sector launches the '[Rethink the Horse Tax](#)' campaign to oppose plans to introduce a bureaucratic quango and unfair new charges on horse owners. The campaign includes an [E-Petition to the Prime Minister](#).
 - **October 2009:** The Advisory Group on Responsibility and Cost Sharing, chaired by Rosemary Radcliffe, is set up, and is asked to review the RCS proposals. The BHIC is represented on the Group.
 - **October 2009:** The equine industry sets out, in a [discussion paper](#), proposals to ensure greater sharing of responsibility between animal owners and Government via a Board embedded within the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
 - **January 2010:** A [Draft Animal Health Bill](#), which proposed the creation of a new 'Animal Health Organisation' separate from Government, is published. The Bill states that plans to introduce cost sharing measures will be dealt with separately.
 - **January 2010:** The Rethink the Horse Tax Petition to the Prime Minister [reaches 10,000 signatures](#). The petition will go on to attract 12,911 signatories before closing in June 2010.
 - **April 2010:** The equine sector [responds formally to the Draft Animal Health Bill](#), firmly opposing the proposals and setting out an alternative way forward.
 - **June 2010:** Following the May 2010 General Election, the new Government [announces that it will drop the proposed 'horse tax'](#) and proposed 'Animal Health' quango. The Government also [responds to the Rethink the Horse Tax petition](#).
 - **December 2010:** The RCS Advisory Group publishes its report, recommending a new way forward based on the creation of an English Partnership Board embedded within Government. The Group's report rejects the original proposals for a new quango and 'horse tax'.
7. **Contact BHIC - BHICpressoffice@googlemail.com**

Ends