

ADVICE ON  
Stallions on land crossed  
by bridleways

The  
British  
Horse  
Society



**This advice note is directed at the keeping of stallions or other entire equines in fields crossed by public rights of way or other routes used by riders or carriage drivers. For simplicity the term stallion is used to include an entire of any equine species. The problems which can arise apply equally to stallions on unenclosed land and their owners should also be aware of the danger their stallions may pose to users of that land.**

Stallions, as with entire of any species (such as bulls, rams and ganders), can behave aggressively at certain times and amorously at others, with equal potential for causing distress or danger to humans or other animals present. Such behaviour can also pose a risk to the stallion from the reaction of another animal.

Where stallions are kept in fields crossed by rights of way with equestrian rights (bridleway, restricted byway or byway), the risk posed by their behaviour can be increased by the presence of ridden or driven horses on the right of way. If the public path is unfenced, there is nothing to prevent a stallion from approaching the passing horses and attacking or attempting to 'recruit' mares.

This can be extremely dangerous for a rider, whose horse may try to defend itself, shy, or bolt, or be driven against a wall, tree or other obstacle. Even experienced riders may have difficulty in dealing with such situations, while children, the elderly and other vulnerable users are at a grave disadvantage. Several instances have occurred where injury has resulted to either horse or rider or both. The situation for a driven horse and its driver is as serious, even though less common because there are fewer drivers.

Legislation restricts keeping certain breeds of bull in fields crossed by rights of way (Section 59, Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981). There is no equivalent legislation for stallions but the danger to passing horses on the public right of way is the same, if not worse, as from bulls.

If an animal (that is not of a dangerous species) acts in such a way as to cause injury or damage to humans or their property it is then known to have this potential. If the act is repeated, the keeper of that animal may be liable under the Animal Act 1971 for the damage or injury caused. Some cases have resulted in the award of high sums to persons injured.

It is hoped that owners of stallions will appreciate that their entire can cause distress, damage and sometimes lifelong disablement by their behaviour. An owner of a stallion must be aware that such behaviour is likely to occur if horses are ridden through a field in which a stallion is kept and should give consideration to avoiding the stallion being in a field with a right of way.

Action has been taken against the owner of a stallion endangering use of a public right of way. A bridleway had been denied to riders for many years because of the presence of a stallion in a field crossed by the bridleway. The District Council took action against the stallion owner under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 which resolved the situation within a week and opened the bridleway.

If you have a mare and are aware of stallions turned out in or adjacent to fields with equestrian access you use, you are urged to be very alert for your mare being in season and to avoid routes near stallions at this time. Even a stallion in an adjacent field to a mare in season may be sufficient to create a dangerous situation.

The BHS strongly recommends that owners of stallions do not keep their stallions in fields crossed by bridleways or byways.

For more information on The British Horse Society's rights of way work contact:

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check for the latest version on  
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