

Pony Partnerships CIC



Animal Welfare Policy 2026-2027

Name of Organisation: Pony Partnerships CIC

Venue/Address: All venues

Date of Review: 1 September 2026

Date of Next Review: 31 August 2027

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1. Policy Statement

Pony Partnerships CIC is committed to maintaining high standards of animal welfare across all its services and activities.

Animals are recognised as sentient beings with individual physical, emotional, behavioural, and social needs.

Their welfare will always take priority over:

- programme delivery;
- participant preference;
- planned outcomes;
- operational convenience.

Animals must be treated with kindness, respect and compassion and must never be forced to participate in an activity.

2. Purpose

This policy sets out Pony Partnerships CIC's commitment to:

- providing safe, responsible, and compassionate animal care;
- protecting animals from pain, suffering, injury, and disease;
- meeting animals' individual welfare needs;
- supporting safe and respectful interactions between animals and people;
- complying with relevant legal and licensing requirements;
- identifying and responding promptly to animal welfare concerns.

Detailed day-to-day procedures are contained in our Standard Operating Procedures.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all animals:

- owned or kept by Pony Partnerships;
- cared for on behalf of Pony Partnerships;

- involved in Pony Partnerships sessions or activities;
- encountered during an activity where Pony Partnerships has responsibility.

It applies to:

- directors;
- staff;
- associates;
- volunteers;
- students and trainees;
- participants;
- parents and carers;
- contractors;
- visitors;
- commissioners and partner organisations.

4. Legal and Licensing Context

This policy has been developed in relation to relevant UK animal welfare legislation, licensing requirements, statutory guidance and recognised good practice.

This includes:

- the Animal Welfare Act 2006;
- the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018;
- relevant Defra guidance;
- the *Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses, Ponies, Donkeys, and their Hybrids*.

Pony Partnerships holds an Animal Activities Licence and will comply with the applicable licence conditions, inspection requirements, and local-authority expectations.

5. Animal Welfare Principles

Pony Partnerships follows a compassionate, ethical, and welfare-centred approach.

Animals will be supported through:

- recognition of their individual needs, preferences, and communication;
- suitable nutrition and access to clean water;
- a safe and appropriate environment;
- opportunities for normal behaviour and social contact;
- appropriate veterinary, dental and preventative healthcare;
- regular observation for signs of illness, injury, pain, stress, or fatigue;
- appropriate rest, choice, and recovery time;
- calm, positive and low-stress handling;
- safe equipment and facilities;
- protection from unnecessary fear, force, intimidation, or punishment;
- professional advice where welfare concerns arise.

Animal participation will be reviewed continually rather than assumed because an animal was previously considered suitable.

6. Responsibilities

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- **Board of Directors:** responsible for ensuring that:
 - appropriate animal welfare arrangements are in place;
 - sufficient resources are available;
 - this policy is approved and reviewed;
 - significant welfare concerns and learning are appropriately overseen.
- **CEO/Manager:** responsible for ensuring that this policy and the related operational procedures are implemented.
- **Animal Welfare Lead:** responsible for day-to-day oversight of:
 - animal health and welfare;
 - routine monitoring and records;
 - veterinary and preventative healthcare arrangements;
 - reported welfare concerns;
 - animal suitability for activities;
 - liaison with veterinary and other animal-care professionals;
 - learning from incidents, inspections, and welfare reviews.
- **Session Lead:** must ensure that, before and during a session:
 - animals involved are suitable at that time;
 - relevant welfare information has been reviewed;
 - participant and animal needs have both been considered;
 - suitable supervision is maintained;
 - an activity is adapted, paused, or stopped where welfare concerns arise.
- **Staff/Associates/Volunteers:** must:
 - follow this policy and relevant procedures;
 - act in the animal's best interests;
 - undertake only tasks for which they are competent or appropriately supervised;
 - remain alert to signs of pain, illness, fear, distress, or fatigue;
 - report concerns promptly;
 - stop or adapt activities where welfare may be compromised.
- **Participants and visitors:** must:
 - follow staff instructions;
 - respect animal choice and personal space;
 - behave calmly around animals;
 - use equipment only when invited and supervised;
 - report any concern they notice.

7. Safe Animal Care and Interaction

Before an animal takes part in an activity, staff must consider:

- the animal's physical and emotional presentation;
- signs of pain, illness, fear, stress, or fatigue;
- the nature and length of the proposed activity;
- recent workload and rest;
- weather, ground, and environmental conditions;
- the participant's presentation and support needs;
- staffing and supervision;
- relevant risk assessments.

During an interaction, staff must observe both the animal and participant.

The activity must be adapted, paused, or stopped where either appears:

- uncomfortable;
- distressed;

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- fearful;
- overwhelmed;
- unsafe;
- tired;
- unwilling to continue.

An animal's movement away, avoidance or refusal to engage must be respected.

8. Participant Safety and Allergy Risk

Animal welfare and participant safety are closely connected.

Activities involving animals must be risk assessed and appropriately supervised.

Relevant participant needs may include:

- mobility or balance needs;
- sensory needs;
- communication needs;
- anxiety or distress;
- medical conditions;
- allergies or respiratory sensitivities.

Animal-related allergy risks may include:

- animal dander;
- hay and straw;
- dust and mould;
- pollen;
- bedding;
- animal feed;
- cleaning products;
- insect stings.

Where an identified risk cannot be managed safely, the activity must be adapted, paused, or stopped.

Animal welfare must not be compromised in order to make an activity proceed.

9. Biosecurity and Disease Control

Pony Partnerships will take reasonable steps to prevent, identify, and manage infectious disease.

This will include, where relevant:

- routine health monitoring;
- suitable cleaning and hygiene;
- safe storage of feed and equipment;
- isolation arrangements;
- veterinary advice;
- restrictions on animal or human movement;
- use of appropriate personal protective equipment;
- safe use of cleaning and disinfecting products;
- communication with relevant people.

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Where infectious illness is suspected, staff must follow veterinary advice and the agreed biosecurity arrangements.

Staff must follow relevant COSHH requirements when using disinfectants, veterinary products, and other hazardous substances.

10. Emergencies

Pony Partnerships will maintain procedures for responding to:

- serious illness or injury;
- veterinary emergencies;
- escaped animals;
- infectious disease;
- fire, flood or severe weather affecting animals;
- emergency relocation;
- sudden death of an animal;
- disruption to licensed activities.

In an emergency, protecting human life takes priority.

People must not place themselves or participants at unacceptable risk in order to move, catch or evacuate an animal.

Site-specific veterinary contacts, emergency access information, animal relocation arrangements, and other operational information must be maintained in the relevant Site Operations File.

11. Retirement, Rehoming and End-of-Life Decisions

Retirement, rehoming, and end-of-life decisions will be made in the animal's best interests.

Decisions will take account of:

- quality of life;
- veterinary advice;
- physical health;
- emotional and behavioural wellbeing;
- long-term care needs;
- suitability for continued involvement in activities;
- the availability of a safe and suitable alternative environment.

An animal will not continue in activities solely because this is operationally convenient.

Where rehoming is appropriate, reasonable steps will be taken to assess the suitability of the future home and protect the animal's long-term welfare.

End-of-life decisions must be made by the person with legal authority, informed by appropriate veterinary advice.

12. Reporting Animal Welfare Concerns

Any animal welfare concern must be reported immediately to the Animal Welfare Lead.

Where the Animal Welfare Lead is unavailable, the concern must be reported to the CEO/Manager.

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Concerns may include:

- illness or injury;
- pain or lameness;
- distress, fear or significant behavioural change;
- unsuitable handling;
- unsafe equipment or environment;
- inadequate food, water, or shelter;
- inappropriate participation in activities;
- neglect, cruelty or mistreatment;
- suspected infectious disease;
- a breach of this policy.

Staff must not wait for proof before reporting a concern.

Where an animal appears seriously ill, injured, in pain or unsafe to continue, staff must:

1. stop the interaction or activity;
2. move participants to a safe area;
3. inform the Animal Welfare Lead immediately;
4. follow veterinary or emergency instructions;
5. prevent further access where necessary;
6. record the concern and action taken.

13. Training and Competence

People involved in animal care or animal-based activities will receive information, instruction, and supervision appropriate to their role.

This may include:

- animal welfare;
- recognising pain, illness, fear, and distress;
- safe and low-stress handling;
- safe participant interaction;
- biosecurity and hygiene;
- risk assessment;
- emergency procedures;
- animal-related allergy awareness;
- correct use of equipment.

No person may undertake an animal-care task unless they are competent or appropriately supervised.

14. Records and Monitoring

Pony Partnerships will maintain appropriate records, including:

- daily opening and closing site and yard checks;
- animal health and welfare observations;
- reported welfare concerns and actions;
- veterinary treatment;
- animal medication;
- preventative healthcare;
- licensed animal-activity records where required;

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- equipment defects;
- biosecurity and cleaning;
- incidents and near misses;
- staff training and competence.

Records must be:

- factual;
- completed promptly;
- stored securely;
- reviewed where concerns or patterns arise.

Learning from records, incidents, inspections, and veterinary advice will be used to improve animal care, risk assessments, and operational procedures.

15. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where:

- legislation or guidance changes;
- licensing requirements change;
- veterinary advice requires a change;
- an incident or welfare concern identifies learning;
- operating arrangements change;
- an inspection, complaint or feedback identifies a need for review;
- the Board requests a review.

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