



**PRESS RELEASE FOR HORSE RIDING AND EQUESTRIAN MEDIA
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Horse Riders Take Action Online as New Cost Sharing Campaign Website and e-Petition to the Prime Minister Go Live

Horse riders across the UK are joining together to urge the Government to think again about imposing an unfair "tax in all but name" on every horse owner in the UK .

The "Rethink the Horse Tax" campaign, launched today by a coalition of organisations representing a broad cross section of the UK horse industry, is calling on riders, breeders and veterinarians to make their voices heard by visiting a new campaign website – www.RethinktheHorseTax.org – and take action by writing to their constituency MPs and by signing an online petition to the Prime Minister.

Campaigners are further concerned that plans to create a new agency will place mounting costs on horse owners at a time when Government support is needed to help boost rural economies and encourage wider participation in outdoor sport.

Under the plans, horse owners would be charged on the same basis as keepers of livestock farm animals such as sheep and pigs – despite the fact that a significant proportion of horses are kept for leisure and sporting, rather than commercial activities, paid for from of income that is already taxed.

Veterinary surgeons have also made it clear that plans to create a new agency responsible for animal health could needlessly complicate the process of managing outbreaks of animal disease animal health, putting at risk the clear single line of command essential in the event of a major disease outbreak. A lack of clarity over the roles of the four Chief Veterinary Officers in England , Wales , Scotland and Ireland in the proposals has also been highlighted as a major concern by the campaign.

And campaigners have further highlighted the fact that the new body would spend much of its time collecting charges from people who own just one horse (65% of horse owners), meaning that the cost of physically collecting the charge will almost outweigh the charge itself – an estimated £2.3m would be needed to collect just £4.5m from horse owners under the plans.

With costs of £14.3m to set up and millions more to maintain the new body in the coming years, campaigners have made it clear that the proposals do not represent value for money for either the equine community or the taxpayer.

Andrew Finding, Chief Executive of the British Equestrian Federation said:

"Through this campaign the horse community has an opportunity to make its voice heard and send a strong message to the Government on cost sharing. The proposals just don't make a convincing case on how hitting horse owners with new costs and extra bureaucracy will benefit either the equine community or taxpayers in general."

Mark Weston, Director of Access Safety and Welfare at the British Horse Society, said:

"We need to make sure that politicians in Westminster are made fully aware of the potential damage that these proposals could do to the horse sector, and the lack of any perceived benefit that they would bring to the millions of Britons who enjoy horse riding each year."

Notes to Editors

About the Rethink the Horse Tax Campaign:

Rethink the Horse Tax is a not-for-profit campaign led by a coalition of organisations representing all parts of the UK horse industry, encompassing horseracing, leisure riding, competitive sport, professional breeding and veterinarians. Organisations behind the campaign include:

- The British Horseracing Authority (BHA)
- The British Equestrian Federation (BEF)
- The Thoroughbred Breeders' Association (TBA)
- The British Horse Society (BHS)
- The British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA)
- The British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA)
- The National Trainers Federation (NTF)
- The Racecourse Owners Association (ROA)

For further information on the campaign please see: www.RethinktheHorseTax.org

Petition to the Prime Minister: <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/Horse-Rethink/>

Further information on the Governments proposals:

- Defra's proposals are available to view here: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/new-independent-body-ah/index.htm>
- Under the proposals, horse owners would be charged an annual fee of £10.50 per animal (as set out in Defra's Impact Assessment).
- Legislation which will bring the creation of the new quango into law was announced in the Government's legislative agenda in July 2009. The new Bill has yet to be debated in the Houses of Parliament.

Some facts about the UK Horse Industry:

- 4.3 million people went horse riding last year. Riding is one of the most popular means by which more and more people are enjoying the British countryside.
- Burdening horse owners with new costs without justification will have a negative impact on an industry which makes a significant contribution to the UK economy in terms of tax revenue and the 270,000 people whose livelihoods depend on the horse sector.
- Horseracing attracts 6 million spectators each year, making it the UK 's second most watched sport.
- The horse racing industry alone contributes around £750,000 per year to central funding aimed at preventing and controlling infectious diseases.

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