

# Animal Welfare Code for Horses, Ponies, Donkeys and their hybrids

## Consultation Responses

### We Asked

The purpose of the consultation by the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture (DEFA) was to seek views on the draft Animal Welfare Code of Practice for Horses, ponies, donkeys and their hybrids.

The purpose of the Animal Welfare Code of Practice for Horses, Ponies, Donkeys and their hybrids is to provide practical guidance to help the public to comply with the provisions of Section 6 of the Animal Welfare Act 2023. It does not tell people precisely how to care for a horse, but summarises important things they should consider when making decisions about how best to care for a horse, pony, donkey or a hybrid. The codes have been deliberately left vague in some areas because of the wide range of animals this code applies to. There will be significant differences in how you should look after a horse, pony, donkey or a hybrid, also depending on their age, breed and what they are kept for.

Breach of a provision of the code is not an offence in itself but if proceedings are brought against you for an offence under the Animal Welfare Act, the Court will look at whether or not you have complied with the Code in deciding whether you have committed an offence.

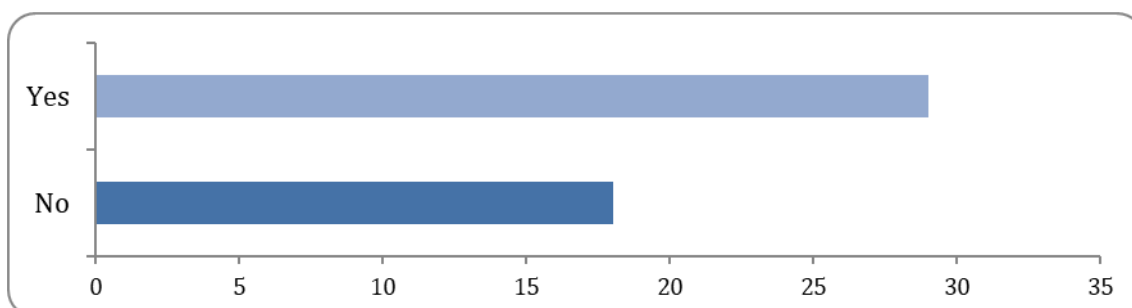
The code was heavily based on the English version of the Animal Welfare Code of Practice for Horses, ponies, donkeys and their hybrids. The Department asked a number of questions around the code of practice to gain views from the public and interested parties on the suitability of the code.

### You Said

The Department for Environment, Food and Agriculture received 45 responses to the consultation. Of these, 41 responses were from individuals and 4 Responses were representatives of society/ company/ charity.

**61.7%** said the code covered everything required. **14.9%** said there something in the code they disagreed with. **19.2%** said there was not enough detail in the code. **93.6%** said the code was understandable.

### Does the content of the code cover everything required?

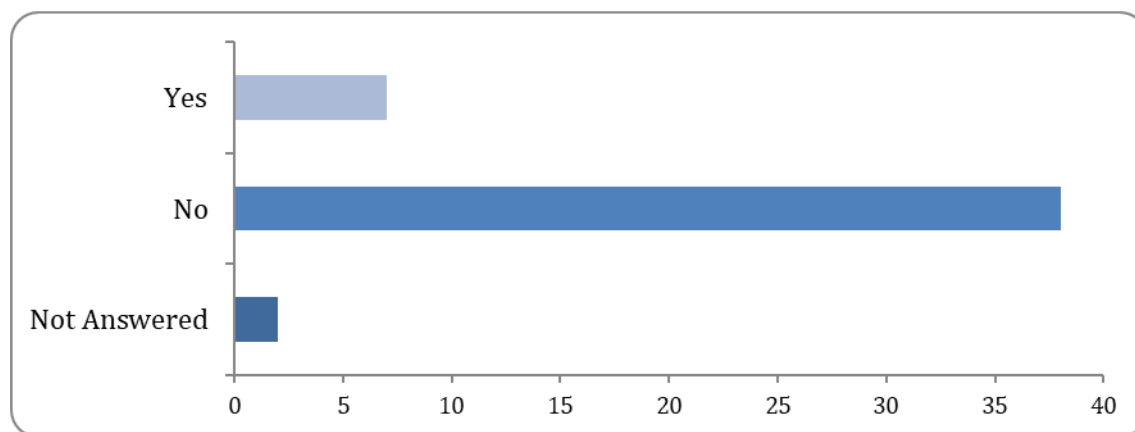


Option	Total	Percent
Yes	29	61.70%
No	18	38.30%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

One respondent requested that there should be information in the code about where to go or who to contact if someone has a concern about a horse. This will be added to all the animal welfare codes.

Individual respondents wanted specifics adding about grooming, more about specific diseases including grass sickness, oversize riders, feed companies and fencing. Although the Department feels these are all valid areas, the code is a general guide and could never be fully comprehensive in all areas. More directions to sources of further information have been put in the back of the code. A respondent commented that sections of the code were reduced from the English version, The Department did this to try and make the new code align with the new dog, cat and rabbit welfare codes. Again, there are links to further information and the code is only a guide to aid people and does not cover in detail all areas.

### Is there anything in the code that you don't agree with?



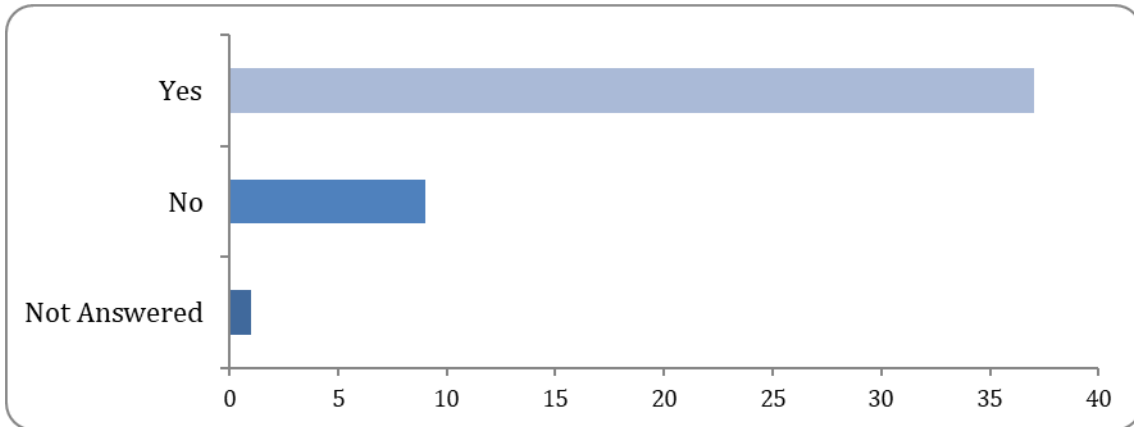
Option	Total	Percent
Yes	7	14.89%
No	38	80.85%
Not Answered	2	4.26%

One respondent requested that all horses should have an outdoor shelter and another requested that all horses should have daily turnout. There are circumstances when these are not required and thus this is not included in the code.

There were some conflicting views including that the code is not comprehensive and also that it is not necessary. The Department feels that the conflicting views in this regard indicate that the detail is adequate at this stage.

Another respondent was concerned that *“there will be some circumstances where it will be impossible to adhere to them but the horse/pony is perfectly healthy and happy”*. As stated at the beginning of the code, it is intended to form a guide and the Department understands that in some circumstances the code will not be adhered to but this would not necessarily cause a welfare concern.

### Is there enough detail in the code?

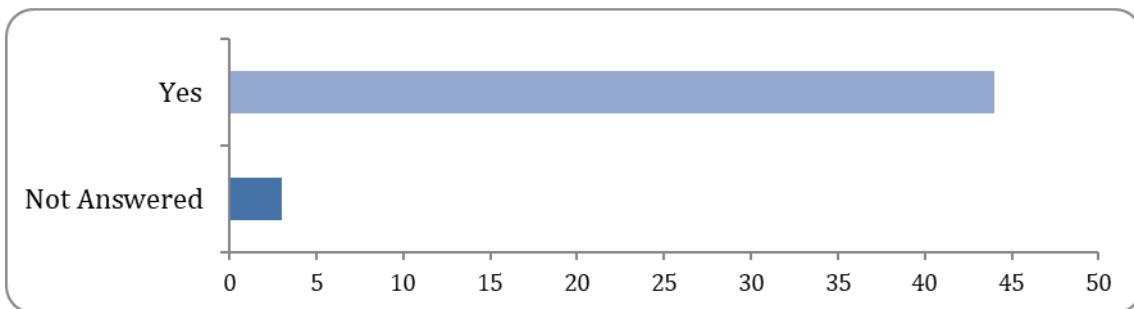


Option	Total	Percent
Yes	37	78.72%
No	9	19.15%
Not Answered	1	2.13%

One respondent wanted people to be “*named and shamed*” for animal cruelty. However, this goes beyond the scope of the code. Another respondent wanted the inclusion of information regarding children only riding ponies they can handle and also about the weight a pony/horse should be able to carry. The Department thinks this goes beyond the scope of the current code and, due to the wide range of horses/ponies/donkeys this code applies to, would be difficult to provide adequate information in this relatively short document. There is further information available if the links at the back of the code are followed.

Other comments to this question are covered elsewhere or not relevant to the code.

### Is the code understandable?



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	44	93.62%
No	0	0.00%
Not Answered	3	6.38%

Three respondents did not answer the question, but all others said it was understandable. Comments include “*It’s written in a useable and understandable way*”.

Other comments include “*I don’t believe it will make any difference to the day to day care of horses*”.

Another comment was “*longer sentences and heavy fines*”. When the Animal Welfare Act 2023 comes into operation it will amend the Cruelty to Animal Act 1997, to increase the fines and sentences to help address this concern.

There were a number of comments about enforcement. The Department does intend to enforce Animal Welfare legislation, the code is a guide for people who are responsible for horses/ponies/donkeys to provide them with information on how they can meet the requirements of the legislation.

A comment was made about the incorrect use of the term “saddler” and this has now been changed in the code to “saddle fitter”.

All responses received during the consultation period have been carefully considered, and were valuable in both ensuring general satisfaction with the proposed code and in identifying some modifications that were needed or might improve the code in order that it can be finalised. They have also highlighted some areas of concern that, although outside the remit of the Animal Welfare Codes of Practice, may lead to earlier consideration of new secondary legislation under the Animal Welfare Act in these areas.

## **We did**

The Department is grateful to those individuals and organisations who took time to respond to the consultation and tell us their views on the proposed Animal Welfare Code of Practice for Horses, Ponies, Donkeys and their Hybrids. Following the consultation, as described above, changes have been made to the code. Most people felt the code was understandable, covered what was required and contained enough detail.