

## **Code of Practice for Horse Drawn Vehicles**

### **Statement**

This information sheet is a copy of the original document published by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions in 2000, updated only to remove information (such as addresses) which are no longer valid. The substantial content remains the same. The Department for Transport address to contact concerning this document is:

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## **Code of Practice for Horse Drawn Vehicles**

**This Code of Practice contains guidance jointly reviewed and agreed by the following organisations:**

The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions  
The British Driving Society  
The British Horse Society  
The Heavy Horse Driving Committee  
The Joint National Horse Education & Training Council  
International League for the Protection of Horses

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## **Introduction**

Due to the increasing popularity of horse drawn vehicles on the road, a working group was set up which includes organisations experienced in the use of such vehicles. The main aim of the group was to produce a Code of Practice which could be used by drivers and operators of horse drawn vehicles, and especially those who use such vehicles to carry paying passengers.

The Code provides a simple but authoritative guide to the recommended minimum levels of competence (the 'road driving assessment') for drivers of horse drawn vehicles. The Code also includes full details of vehicle safety checks (the 'carriage check list').

## **Note**

This Code of Practice should not be treated as a legal document. The emphasis is on the safety of the driver and passengers, carriage and horse(s) and other road users. Every effort has been made to provide true, helpful and accurate information.

## **Scope of the Code**

The Code applies to all types of horse drawn vehicles used on the road but it is primarily aimed at those vehicles carrying paying passengers (i.e. vehicles used for 'hire and reward'). The type of vehicles referred to in the Code are: two or four wheeled modern carriages, two or four wheeled traditional carriages and horse drawn passenger carrying vehicles. The Code applies to these carriages whether driven to a single horse or pairs or teams of horses.

## **Objectives**

The Code's objectives are:

- To provide guidance for new and existing drivers of horse drawn vehicles carrying paying passengers
- To summarise the road driving assessment for single, pair and teams of horses
- To provide details of a recognised carriage safety check list

## **The Road Driving Assessment**

This test is the recommended minimum competence for driving horses/ponies and vehicles carrying paying passengers on the public highway. The assessment is not a compulsory requirement for those wishing to drive horses but may be required if an operator wants to receive a local authority licence to operate a passenger carrying service. Applications for an assessment may be made either to the British Driving Society or the Heavy Horse Training Committee who appoint a panel of assessors. There is a small fee for the assessment and on satisfactory completion a certificate of competence (Road Driving Certificate) will be granted.

The practical driving section of the assessment, which can be carried out at the driver or operator's premises, may be taken with a single, pair or team and will carry the relevant certification. The harnessing and underpinning of knowledge must include a single and a pair.

Grandfather rights for this assessment can be retained by attaining a certificate of Approved Prior Learning. This certificate can only be issued by a group of approved and qualified assessors, namely the Harness Horse Training Board, the British Driving Society or the Heavy Horse Training Committee.

### **Method of Inspection**

The competence will be assessed by direct observation of practical performance and oral questioning of underpinning knowledge. The assessment will be in line with safe yard practice and will take approximately 2 hours.

The British Driving Society Proficiency Test and the Heavy Horse Training Committee Road Driving Assessment test are directly accreditable.

### **The Carriage Check List**

This is a comprehensive list of safety checks that should be carried out to ensure that the carriage and its fittings are safe and in good working condition. The checks can be carried out either by the driver/operator or by a panel appointed by the British Driving Society or the Heavy Horse Training Committee.

# **The Road Driving Assessment**

## **SECTION A: Prepare horse and vehicle for road use**

### **Performance Criteria**

1. Control of the horse is maintained at all times
2. Harness is selected and fitted to the horse for road use
3. Horse is safely hitched to the vehicle following laid down procedures
4. The controlling position adopted is appropriate to the vehicle in use
5. The health, safety and security of the horse, self and others is maintained throughout

### **Range Statement**

**Harness:** Show; exercise

**Vehicle:** Two wheeled; four wheeled

### **Knowledge and Understanding**

1. Correct fitting of harness
2. Dangers of inappropriate procedures and adjustments to harness
3. Safety precautions to be taken when handling horses
4. State of feet and the effect on pulling power
5. Implications of the Road Traffic Act when preparing vehicle
6. Importance of safety checks
7. Mounting and dismounting procedures
8. Why is it important to adopt the correct driving position?

# **The Road Driving Assessment**

## **SECTION B: Carry out road driving manoeuvres**

### **Performance Criteria**

1. Horse and vehicle are driven smoothly at a speed appropriate to road conditions
2. Obstacles encountered during driving are safely negotiated
3. The vehicle is correctly positioned on the road for safe and effective driving
4. Road safety procedures are adhered to at all times
5. Agreed cooling down procedures are followed on completion of work
6. The health, safety and security of horse, self and others is maintained throughout

### **Range Statement**

**Conditions:** Traffic; road surface; weather; noise level; gradients; pedestrians

**Obstacles:** Road junctions; stationary vehicles; traffic lights; roundabouts

### **Knowledge and Understanding**

1. Horses' reactions when working alone and in company
2. Importance of returning a horse 'cool' from work
3. Effects of weather on road surfaces
4. Operating limits on vehicles
5. Application of the Highway Code and Road Traffic Acts
6. Use of the whip
7. Procedures in the event of a road traffic accident
8. Types of hand signals

# **The Road Driving Assessment**

## **SECTION C: Attend to horse and vehicle after driving**

### **Performance Criteria**

1. Vehicle is parked and secured at designated location
2. Horse is unhitched from the vehicle, harness removed and returned to relevant location
3. Approved cooling down procedures are implemented before horse is returned to stables
4. Control of the horse is maintained at all times
5. The health, safety and security of the horse, self and others is maintained throughout

### **Range Statement**

**Vehicles:** Two wheeled; four wheeled

### **Knowledge and Understanding**

1. Safety procedure when unhitching
2. Recommended cooling down procedures
3. Methods of braking and securing vehicles
4. Circumstances when assistance is required
5. Correct storage and security of vehicle

## CARRIAGE CHECK LIST

### SECTION A - 2 WHEEL CARRIAGES (TRADITIONAL)

| Area of inspection | Check  | Reason for rejection   |
|--------------------|--|--|
| <b>WHEELS</b>      | <p>1. End play on axle</p> <p>2. Tight joints into hub</p> <p>Spokes into felloes</p> <p>Steel rim or clincher on felloes</p> <p>3. Rubbers for protrusion</p> <p>4. General soundness of wood</p> | <p>End play of 12mm or more</p> <p>Any looseness found in these areas, by using manual force</p> <p>Any looseness found in these areas, by using manual force</p> <p>Any looseness found in these areas, by using manual force</p> <p>Rubbers protruding from the channel</p> <p>Evidence of woodworm, rot or cracks</p> |
| <b>AXLES</b>       | <p>1. Collinge axle - nuts and split pin in place</p> <p>2. Mail axle - check hub bolts and nuts on inside of moon plate</p> <p>3. Lubrication (both axle types)</p> <p>4. Washers and seals</p>   | <p>Signs of corrosion, looseness or missing components</p> <p>Signs of corrosion, looseness or missing components</p> <p>Lack of lubrication</p> <p>Signs of corrosion, looseness or missing components</p>  |

**SECTION A (continued) - 2 WHEEL CARRIAGES (TRADITIONAL)**

| <b>Area of inspection</b> | <b>Check</b>  | <b>Reason for rejection</b>  |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| <b>SHAFTS</b>             | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="560 309 935 383">1. Thickness and strength</li> <li data-bbox="560 456 935 530">2. Wood and laminations</li> <li data-bbox="560 604 935 703">3. Slack and movement where shaft joins vehicle at drawbar</li> <li data-bbox="560 745 935 819">4. Shaft fixings, bolt and bolt attachments</li> <li data-bbox="560 896 935 969">5. Tug stops and breeching staples</li> </ol> | <p data-bbox="943 309 1353 416">Inadequate thickness and strength in keeping with carriage size</p> <p data-bbox="943 456 1353 564">Evidence of woodworm, rot or cracks and delaminations</p> <p data-bbox="943 604 1353 678">Excessive slackness and movement</p> <p data-bbox="943 745 1353 853">Signs of corrosion, looseness or missing components</p> <p data-bbox="943 896 1353 1039">Incorrectly positioned, signs of corrosion, looseness or missing components and excessive wear</p> |
| <b>SPRINGS</b>            | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="560 1079 935 1187">1. Leaves and fixings, especially ends of full elliptic springs</li> <li data-bbox="560 1229 935 1337">2. U-bolts supporting Springs and their fixings to the axle</li> <li data-bbox="560 1379 935 1415">3. Threads of nuts</li> <li data-bbox="560 1458 935 1565">4. Leatherwork and tension brackets on C springs</li> </ol>                          | <p data-bbox="943 1079 1353 1153">Broken, excessive wear or collapsed</p> <p data-bbox="943 1229 1353 1337">Signs of corrosion, looseness or missing components</p> <p data-bbox="943 1379 1353 1415">Stripped or worn threads</p> <p data-bbox="943 1458 1353 1532">Deterioration of leatherwork and tension brackets</p>   |

## SECTION A (continued) - 2 WHEEL CARRIAGES (TRADITIONAL)

| Area of inspection | Check  | Reason for rejection  |
|--------------------|--|---|
| <b>BODY</b>        | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="560 309 938 398">1. Woodwork</li> <li data-bbox="560 409 938 499">2. Panels</li> <li data-bbox="560 510 938 633">3. Spring mountings and shaft fixings</li> <li data-bbox="560 645 938 734">4. All bolts and screws</li> <li data-bbox="560 745 938 869">5. Seat securing mechanism</li> <li data-bbox="560 880 938 969">6. Cushion straps</li> <li data-bbox="560 981 938 1182">7. Straps and mounting irons</li> </ol> | <p data-bbox="946 309 1350 398">Evidence of woodworm, rot or cracks</p> <p data-bbox="946 409 1350 499">Cracks and safety related damage</p> <p data-bbox="946 510 1350 633">Signs of corrosion, looseness or missing components</p> <p data-bbox="946 645 1350 734">Insecure or general looseness</p> <p data-bbox="946 745 1350 869">Insecure or general looseness</p> <p data-bbox="946 880 1350 969">Missing or damaged, insecure or general looseness</p> <p data-bbox="946 981 1350 1182">Missing or damaged, insecure or general looseness and deterioration</p> |
| <b>SWINGLETREE</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="560 1193 938 1426">1. Swingletree (wood or metal) including trace hooks and fixing bolts, chains (if fitted)</li> </ol>  | <p data-bbox="946 1193 1350 1426">Insecure, hook screws not in place, signs of corrosion, worn or missing components, evidence of woodworm, rot, cracks and safety related damage</p>   |

## SECTION B - 2 WHEEL CARRIAGES (MODERN)

| Area of inspection          | Check   | Reason for rejection   |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| <b>WHEELS/<br/>AXLES</b>    | <b>If not steel: check as for traditional; otherwise</b><br>1. Welds<br><br>2. Bearings Adjustment  | Evidence of fatigue or cracks<br><br>Excessive play, roughness or tightness  |
| <b>SHAFTS</b>               | <b>If not steel: check as for traditional; otherwise:</b><br>1. Material and construction (especially where shaft joins carriage)<br><br>2. Tug stops and breeching staples | Evidence of fatigue (often indicated by cracks in paintwork), excessive wear around bolt mountings, incorrect components<br><br>Incorrectly positioned, signs of corrosion, looseness or missing components and excessive wear   |
| <b>SPRINGS</b>              | <b>As for traditional vehicle, and:</b><br>1. Coil spring<br><br>2. Damper Unit (if fitted)<br><br>3. Rubber suspension unit  | Incomplete, cracked or fractured, worn or corroded so that its cross-sectional area is seriously weakened<br><br>Damage, corrosion, insecurity of attachment and fluid leakage<br><br>Looseness, cracks or fractures, damage or corrosion, separation between flexible element and metal |
| <b>BODY AND SWINGLETREE</b> | <b>As for traditional vehicle, and:</b><br>1. Sliding body balance system (if used)   | Insecure, hook screws not in place, signs of corrosion, missing or loose components, evidence of woodworm, rot, cracks and safety related damage   |

## SECTION C - 4 WHEEL CARRIAGES (TRADITIONAL)

| Area of inspection       | Check  | Reason for rejection  |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| <b>ADDITIONAL CHECKS</b> | <b>As for 2 wheel carriages, and:</b><br><br><b>1.</b> Forecarriage turntable and centre pin<br><br><b>2.</b> Support plates<br><br><b>3.</b> Polehousing, polepin polehead and bearing (if fitted)<br><br><b>4.</b> Shaft bolts (if fitted)<br><br><b>5.</b> Mounting steps, rails etc. and seats<br><br><b>6.</b> Hoods and folding moveable safety features<br><br><b>7. Brakes:</b><br><i>(a) Traditional</i><br><br><i>(b) Modern (hydraulic)</i> | Excessive play, worn centre pin, woodworm, rot or cracks<br><br>Insufficient lubrication<br><br>Stress cracking, excessive wear and excessive play in bearing<br><br>Signs of corrosion, looseness or missing components<br><br>Sharp edges, insecure, worn or inappropriate components<br><br>Sharp edges, insecure, worn or inappropriate components<br><br>Worn, damaged or insecure blocks, excessive play or wear to linkage<br><br>Low fluid level or leakage, worn pads, excessive play or wear to linkage, damage to hydraulic line |

## SECTION D - 4 WHEEL CARRIAGES (MODERN)

| Area of inspection       | Check  | Reason for rejection   |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| <b>ADDITIONAL CHECKS</b> | <b>As for 2 wheel carriages and 4 wheel traditional, and:</b><br>1. Ball bearing turntable (if fitted)<br><br>2. Pole springing system | Excessive play and insufficient lubrication<br><br>Signs of corrosion, missing or loose components |

### Horse

It is recommended that any horse which is to be used for the carriage of passengers should be at least six years old. It is not the aim of this Code to set out guidance or information on veterinary checks for horses and it is recommended that operators seek the advice of a veterinary surgeon on the suitability of any animal for the purpose of drawing a carriage.

### Harness

Drivers should ensure that all harnesses are properly fitted and appropriate for their particular use. Harnesses should also be regularly checked for soundness and safety.

## **Further Reading**

*The British Driving Society Introduction to Driving*  
(The British Driving Society) published by the BDS, Warwick

*Breaking a Horse to Harness*  
(Sallie Walrond) published by J A Allen, London

*Driving a Harness Horse*  
(Sallie Walrond) published by J A Allen, London

*The Art of Driving*  
(Max Pape) published by J A Allen, London