

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of the Environment, Transport and the Regions in 2000, updated only to remove information (such as addresses) which are no longer valid.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
WHEELS	1. End play on axle	End play of 12mm or more
	2. Tight joints into hub	Any looseness found in these areas, by using manual force
	Spokes into felloes	Any looseness found in these areas, by using manual force
	Steel rim or clincher on felloes	Any looseness found in these areas, by using manual force
	3. Rubbers for protrusion	Rubbers protruding from the channel
4. General soundness of wood	Evidence of woodworm, rot or cracks	
AXLES	1. Collinge axle - nuts and split pin in place	Signs of corrosion, looseness or missing components
	2. Mail axle - check hub bolts and nuts on inside of moon plate	Signs of corrosion, looseness or missing components
	3. Lubrication (both axle types)	Lack of lubrication
	4. Washers and seals	Signs of corrosion, looseness or missing components

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

Area of inspection	Check	Reason for rejection
SHAFTS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="560 309 938 383">1. Thickness and strength <li data-bbox="560 456 938 530">2. Wood and laminations <li data-bbox="560 604 938 707">3. Slack and movement where shaft joins vehicle at drawbar <li data-bbox="560 745 938 819">4. Shaft fixings, bolt and bolt attachments <li data-bbox="560 893 938 967">5. Tug stops and breeching staples 	<p data-bbox="946 309 1359 412">Inadequate thickness and strength in keeping with carriage size</p> <p data-bbox="946 456 1359 560">Evidence of woodworm, rot or cracks and delaminations</p> <p data-bbox="946 604 1359 678">Excessive slackness and movement</p> <p data-bbox="946 745 1359 848">Signs of corrosion, looseness or missing components</p> <p data-bbox="946 896 1359 1037">Incorrectly positioned, signs of corrosion, looseness or missing components and excessive wear</p>
SPRINGS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="560 1079 938 1189">1. Leaves and fixings, especially ends of full elliptic springs <li data-bbox="560 1227 938 1330">2. U-bolts supporting Springs and their fixings to the axle <li data-bbox="560 1368 938 1404">3. Threads of nuts <li data-bbox="560 1442 938 1545">4. Leatherwork and tension brackets on C springs 	<p data-bbox="946 1079 1359 1153">Broken, excessive wear or collapsed</p> <p data-bbox="946 1227 1359 1330">Signs of corrosion, looseness or missing components</p> <p data-bbox="946 1368 1359 1404">Stripped or worn threads</p> <p data-bbox="946 1442 1359 1516">Deterioration of leatherwork and tension brackets</p>

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

Area of inspection	Check	Reason for rejection
BODY	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="564 309 759 344">1. Woodwork <li data-bbox="564 416 703 452">2. Panels <li data-bbox="564 524 919 595">3. Spring mountings and shaft fixings <li data-bbox="564 667 890 703">4. All bolts and screws <li data-bbox="564 775 804 846">5. Seat securing mechanism <li data-bbox="564 891 820 927">6. Cushion straps <li data-bbox="564 1034 903 1106">7. Straps and mounting irons 	<p data-bbox="951 309 1350 376">Evidence of woodworm, rot or cracks</p> <p data-bbox="951 416 1318 483">Cracks and safety related damage</p> <p data-bbox="951 524 1254 631">Signs of corrosion, looseness or missing components</p> <p data-bbox="951 667 1232 734">Insecure or general looseness</p> <p data-bbox="951 775 1232 842">Insecure or general looseness</p> <p data-bbox="951 891 1254 999">Missing or damaged, insecure or general looseness</p> <p data-bbox="951 1034 1350 1142">Missing or damaged, insecure or general looseness and deterioration</p>
SWINGLETREE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="564 1191 912 1330">1. Swingletree (wood or metal) including trace hooks and fixing bolts, chains (if fitted) 	<p data-bbox="951 1191 1350 1402">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
WHEELS/ AXLES	If not steel: check as for traditional; otherwise 1. Welds 2. Bearings Adjustment	Evidence of fatigue or cracks Excessive play, roughness or tightness
SHAFTS	If not steel: check as for traditional; otherwise: 1. Material and construction (especially where shaft joins carriage) 2. Tug stops and breeching staples	Evidence of fatigue (often indicated by cracks in paintwork), excessive wear around bolt mountings, incorrect components Incorrectly positioned, signs of corrosion, looseness or missing components and excessive wear
SPRINGS	As for traditional vehicle, and: 1. Coil spring 2. Damper Unit (if fitted) 3. Rubber suspension unit	Incomplete, cracked or fractured, worn or corroded so that its cross-sectional area is seriously weakened Damage, corrosion, insecurity of attachment and fluid leakage Looseness, cracks or fractures, damage or corrosion, separation between flexible element and metal
BODY AND SWINGLETREE	As for traditional vehicle, and: 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
ADDITIONAL CHECKS	As for 2 wheel carriages, and: 1. Forecarriage turntable and centre pin 2. Support plates 3. Polehousing, polepin polehead and bearing (if fitted) 4. Shaft bolts (if fitted) 5. Mounting steps, rails etc. and seats 6. Hoods and folding moveable safety features 7. Brakes: <i>(a) Traditional</i> <i>(b) Modern (hydraulic)</i>	Excessive play, worn centre pin, woodworm, rot or cracks Insufficient lubrication Stress cracking, excessive wear and excessive play in bearing Signs of corrosion, looseness or missing components Sharp edges, insecure, worn or inappropriate components Sharp edges, insecure, worn or inappropriate components Worn, damaged or insecure blocks, excessive play or wear to linkage 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
ADDITIONAL CHECKS	As for 2 wheel carriages and 4 wheel traditional, and: 1. Ball bearing turntable (if fitted) 2. Pole springing system	Excessive play and insufficient lubrication 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