

HPA – Communication November 2018 - Hiring of Polo Ponies.

1. Since 1964 it has been a legal requirement in the UK that anyone who operates a riding establishment must hold a current Riding Establishment License (REL). On 1st October 2018 The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 came into force and these have tightened further the rules around RELs.
2. A riding establishment is any business which keeps horses either for letting out on hire for riding and/or which provides riding lessons in return for payment. Please see www.gov.uk/riding-establishment-licence. Therefore, anyone commercially renting out polo ponies be it for matches, chukkas or stick and ball, or providing polo lessons, must hold an REL.
3. An REL is issued by the relevant local authority after an inspection of the establishment, which includes the ponies which are to be used. These must have been checked and registered as suitable as well as the establishment having the appropriate insurance. Only those ponies included in the register are part of the license.
4. Once issued the REL must be displayed by the establishment together with their 3rd Party Liability and Employers Liability insurances. The REL number must also be on their website and social media pages.
5. It is important that individuals make their own enquiries if hiring and it is very much in their interest that their hired pony is covered under a Riding Establishment License. On the website of the Association of Polo Schools and Pony Hirers (APSPH) www.apsph-polo.org.uk there is a list of members of the APSPH together with the expiry date of their REL.
6. If you are hiring polo ponies from someone not on the APSPH website, then you are strongly advised to ask for a copy of their REL. This should include a list of all the horses that they use as part of their REL. If they cannot show you this then it is likely that they will be breaking the law and that you will be exposing yourself to unnecessary risk as you cannot be sure as to the existence or extent of any insurance cover.
7. The penalty for running a riding establishment without a license is a fine of up to £1,000 or imprisonment for up to 3 months, or both.

The welfare of ponies and the safety of players are high priorities for the HPA and we therefore urge anyone hiring polo ponies to check the credentials of the business or individual providing them.