

## Stand up for horse health and take the NEHS Survey

The National Equine Health Survey (NEHS) is run annually by leading charity Blue Cross, in partnership with the British Equine Veterinary Association and with the support of many of the country's leading equestrian charities and organisations. It's the only project of its kind enabling horse owners to give anonymous feedback about the health of their horses, ponies and donkeys so that the most common diseases and problems be identified, prioritised and addressed.



NEHS is a charitable initiative that has now been running for five years. Its value has attracted support from SPILLERS and Zoetis, which has helped it to continue to grow and deliver results. Participation increased threefold last year, with data collected from over 11,002 horses, ponies, donkeys and mules in the UK, showing the nation's enthusiasm to help improve horse health.

### Important benchmark

The results are helping to steer awareness, education and research, establishing benchmarks for equine health and disease in the UK and defining priorities for future research, training and education. Equine and veterinary colleges and universities also use the data as primary source material.

### Atypical Myopathy

Last year we discovered more about the rise of Atypical Myopathy in the UK. Further awareness of this highly fatal disease is now being raised, incidences are being recorded and monitored by UK vets, and further research is continuing.

### Lameness

For the second year lameness was identified as the most common syndrome and there was an apparent increase in laminitis compared with previous years. Last year's results revealed that almost one in five (18.5%) horses were suffering with lameness due to joint disease or other non-foot related problems. The results are consistent with last year's non-foot related lameness figure of 18.6%.

### Laminitis

NEHS 2014 also highlighted that laminitis had a much higher prevalence than in previous years (7.1%) with 43% of these recorded as first episodes. Past NEHS results showed a lower number of horses affected by laminitis (4.4% overall prevalence of laminitis, with 25% first episodes, 2013) but further work is needed to confirm if this increase is representative of the total horse population in the UK. This increase may have been linked to last year's mild winter, extensive rainfall and consistently warm spring. These conditions were ideal for flushes of grass growth, known to be a trigger for the disease.



Are we getting better at recognising laminitis or is it becoming more common? *Image courtesy of World Horse Welfare.*

## Worms

The 2014 survey also highlighted that 20% of owners are unaware of the risk of encysted small redworm and showed that the reported number of overweight horses and ponies had more than doubled since the previous year.

Year on year the survey is continuing to build a more precise picture of the health of our horses and ponies. The data collected has become a crucial information resource for the equestrian industry. Consistent trends have already challenged some established dogma on disease prevalence, for example laminitis, and validated much of the accepted veterinary opinion, for example on lameness and colic. NEHS is helping to steer awareness, education and research with the sole purpose of safeguarding the future healthcare of our horses.

Gemma Taylor, Education Officer at Blue Cross said: "We are renowned as a nation of horse lovers so sparing five minutes of your time is surely not too much to ask? Each and every one of you who completes the survey will be helping to secure a healthier future for our precious horses and ponies so please help us and sign up now."

Visit [www.bluecross.org.uk/NEHS](http://www.bluecross.org.uk/NEHS) now or email [NEHS@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:NEHS@bluecross.org.uk) to register.

*The CARE team would like to thank The Blue Cross for providing this information and we hope more owners will take part in both the NEHS survey and the CARE study to help our horses!*

