

Module code: MOD011001	Version: 1 Date Amended: 08/Oct/2025
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1. Module Title
Ethical and Sustainable Approaches to Equine Welfare

2a. Module Leader
Rosa Verwijs

2b. School
Writtle School of Agriculture, Animal and Environmental Sciences

2c. Faculty
Faculty of Science and Engineering

3a. Level
6

3b. Module Type
Standard (fine graded)

4a. Credits
30

4b. Study Hours
300

5. Restrictions			
Type	Module Code	Module Name	Condition
Pre-requisites:	None		
Co-requisites:	None		
Exclusions:	None		
Courses to which this module is restricted:	BSc Equine Science; BSc Equine Business Management; BSc Equine Therapy, Rehabilitation and Performance		

LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

6a. Module Description

This module will guide you through the ethical and sustainable use of horses across various sectors including performance, leisure, work, breeding, and sport. Each of these areas presents its own unique ethical considerations and at any given time there are a range of critical welfare issues challenging the wellbeing of the horse.

You'll explore how current welfare standards are governed by a mix of legislation, governance frameworks, and regulatory compliance measures. These standards differ significantly across regions and sectors, which can represent further challenges in terms of their compliance with recent research findings, industry initiatives and as such their efficacy in regulating stakeholders in the industry. This module will also examine the role of management and husbandry practices in influencing horse welfare. Key factors such as housing, transport, tack, and training aids play crucial roles. Extrinsic factors such as nutrition, pain, and disease also affect the behavioural wellbeing of horses and failing to meet their behavioural needs can result in abnormal behaviours and stereotypies as well as a wide range of behavioural problems, that challenge human caretakers and further compromise equine welfare.

The ethical challenges in horse welfare include balancing the needs of the horse with the demands of human use. Throughout this module, you'll look at how the role of welfare organisations plays a pivotal role in promoting ethical leadership and safeguarding horse welfare. You'll explore strategies for future-proofing horse welfare, which involves developing ethical frameworks, evolving standards, adapting management practices, and promoting sustainability in husbandry and training. Advocating for horses, promoting social responsibility, and fostering ethical leadership are essential to driving positive change. Since human behaviour greatly impacts horse welfare, addressing these factors is essential for making meaningful improvements in the equine industry.

6b. Outline Content

Ethics of horse use across all sectors globally (performance, leisure, work, breeding, sport, etc.)

Critical evaluation of current welfare standards; legislation, governance, frameworks, regulatory compliance

Discussion of pertinent welfare issues such as overbreeding, horse crisis, delayed euthanasia, abuse in sport

Evaluation of common management, husbandry and riding factors on welfare, such as housing, transport, tack, training aids, different training and riding styles

Extrinsic factors affecting the behavioural wellbeing of the horse and their assessment – nutrition, pain, disease and how these are assessed

Impact of not meeting the horse's behavioural needs – abnormal behaviours, stereotypies, other behavioural issues

Assessment the causes and solutions for behavioural issues, with relevant identification of allied professionals

Measurement of behaviour and welfare – qualitative and quantitative methods and technologies

Role of welfare organisations and development of ethical leadership Industry initiatives and their efficacy in safeguarding welfare, e.g. welfare and ethical frameworks, legislative changes, welfare stewarding

Identification of ethical challenges, proposal of strategies to future-proof the welfare of horses within various equine disciplines and settings – evolving standards, adaptation and sustainability in management, husbandry and training, advocating for horses, social responsibility, ethical leadership

Social licence to operate in the equine sector – equestrianism and general horse ownership, public perception, collaboration of stakeholders, social responsibility

Human factors affecting equine welfare – horse-human dyad, attachment theory, knowledge, training, culture, economic challenges, physical and mental health, psychology, ethics and morals

Human Behaviour Change – how we can implement and affect change in the industry

6c. Key Texts/Literature

The reading list to support this module is available at: <https://readinglists.aru.ac.uk/>

6d. Specialist Learning Resources

Equestrian Facilities

7. Learning Outcomes (threshold standards)		
No.	Type	On successful completion of this module the student will be expected to be able to:
1	Knowledge and Understanding	Appraise factors contributing to the behavioural wellbeing of the horse
2	Knowledge and Understanding	Identify and assess welfare and ethical issues in the equine industry
3	Knowledge and Understanding	Evaluate the relevance and application of the different concepts and methods available to assess equine welfare
4	Intellectual, practical, affective and transferrable skills	Review the roles of different stakeholders operating within the equine industry, and evaluate their efficacy and ability to influence the sustainability of the equine industry
5	Intellectual, practical, affective and transferrable skills	Identify and apply relevant research, models and practices to propose solutions for the ethical management, training and the welfare of the horse
6	Intellectual, practical, affective and transferrable skills	Discuss the importance of ethical leadership, social responsibility and sustainability in regards to welfare in the equine industry

8a. Module Occurrence to which this MDF Refers				
Year	Occurrence	Period	Location	Mode of Delivery
2026/7	ZZF	Template For Face To Face Learning Delivery		Face to Face

8b. Learning Activities for the above Module Occurrence			
Learning Activities	Hours	Learning Outcomes	Details of Duration, frequency and other comments
Lectures	48	1-6	Lectures
Other teacher managed learning	24	1-6	Practicals, seminars/workshops, tutorials/critiques, student presentations - Weekly sessions involving taught theory, student led workshops and practical application of theory.
Student managed learning	228	1-6	Directed reading. Canvas activities. Preparation for workshops, seminars and summative assessments. Supporting material to direct further reading and prepare for assessments
TOTAL:	300		

9. Assessment for the above Module Occurrence					
Assessment No.	Assessment Method	Learning Outcomes	Weighting (%)	Fine Grade or Pass/Fail	Qualifying Mark (%)
010	Practical	1,2	40 (%)	Fine Grade	30 (%)
20 minute seminar/debate					
Assessment No.	Assessment Method	Learning Outcomes	Weighting (%)	Fine Grade or Pass/Fail	Qualifying Mark (%)
011	Coursework	3,4,5,6	60 (%)	Fine Grade	30 (%)
3000 word review					

In order to pass this module, students are required to achieve an overall mark of 40% (for modules at levels 3, 4, 5 and 6) or 50% (for modules at level 7*).

In addition, students are required to:

(a) achieve the qualifying mark for each element of fine graded assessment as specified above

(b) pass any pass/fail elements

[* the pass mark of 50% applies for all module occurrences from the academic year 2024/25 – see Section 3a of this MDF to check the level of the module and Section 8a of this MDF to check the academic year]