



RISK ASSESSMENTS IN THE THOROUGHBRED BREEDING INDUSTRY (UK)

Risk assessments are a vital part of maintaining a safe and healthy environment in the thoroughbred breeding industry. A risk assessment is a careful examination of the tasks, processes, and environment to identify potential hazards and evaluate the risks they pose to people, horses, and the wider operation. The aim is to ensure that risks are either eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level through practical control measures.

Legal responsibilities – risk assessment

Businesses have a legal duty to safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of their employees and anyone else who may be affected by their work activities. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, this includes identifying hazards that could cause harm, evaluating the likelihood and severity of that harm, and taking appropriate steps to remove or control the risks.

Why risk assessments matter

Stud farms and breeding facilities involve a wide range of activities, from handling mares, foals, and stallions to managing stables, paddocks, driving, manual handling, and chemical use. Each of these activities carries potential risks, including:

- **Physical injuries:** kicks, bites, slips, trips, or falls while handling horses.
- **Health risks from substances:** exposure to disinfectants, veterinary medicines, pesticides, bedding dust, or fuels.
- **Environmental hazards:** wet or uneven surfaces, manure, machinery, and equipment.
- **Operational risks:** vehicle, horse and pedestrian interactions, biosecurity breaches, or fire hazards.

Identifying these hazards is essential to prevent accidents, protect staff and visitors, and safeguard the welfare of horses.

Steps in conducting a risk assessment

- 1. Identify hazards:** Look at every task, area, and substance that could cause harm. Consider the horses, staff, visitors, and contractors.
- 2. Decide who might be harmed and how:** Consider the severity and likelihood of injury or illness. Different roles (grooms, veterinarians, farriers) may face different risks.
- 3. Evaluate the risks and implement controls:** Reduce risks using practical measures, such as safe handling techniques, personal protective equipment (PPE), proper storage, ventilation, and safe working procedures.
- 4. Record findings:** Keep a written record detailing the hazards, risks, and control measures. This is especially important for regulatory compliance and for training new staff.
- 5. Review and update:** Risk assessments are living documents. They should be reviewed regularly and updated when new procedures, substances, or equipment are introduced, or when an incident occurs.

Benefits of risk assessments in breeding

- **Protect staff and visitors:** Reduces injuries and illness.
- **Safeguard horses:** Prevents accidents that could harm animals.
- **Regulatory compliance:** Meets health and safety legislation.
- **Efficient operations:** Clear procedures reduce errors and incidents.
- **Culture of safety:** Promotes awareness and accountability among all personnel.

Risk assessments are not just a legal requirement - they are a practical tool to maintain a safe, professional, and productive environment where both people and horses can thrive.

Contractor risk assessments

The Stud Manager must check that contractors have suitable risk assessments in place before they start work on site.

This information and draft documentation is provided by the TBA as a guide to members and does not constitute legal or other professional advice. It is not a substitute for individual legal advice and members are recommended to seek advice on their own circumstances from a specialist health and safety advisor. The TBA does not accept liability for any loss sustained by members in reliance on the information published on this website.