



## FIRE SAFETY IN THE THOROUGHBRED BREEDING INDUSTRY (UK)

Fire safety is a legal and practical responsibility. Stud farms and breeding yards present particular fire risks. Stables are inherently vulnerable due to easily ignitable materials (straw, hay, wooden structures), machinery, fuel, muck heaps and residential buildings.

They are also often in remote locations, making them susceptible to both accidental and intentional fires, potential delays in emergency services arrival time, and the possibility of no hydrant access.

### Legal responsibilities – fire risk assessment

Fire safety duties are set out in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO). The 'Responsible Person' – usually the employer, owner, or person in control of the premises – must take reasonable steps to reduce fire risk and protect employees, visitors, and others.

This includes:

- Arranging and regularly reviewing a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment
- Implementing appropriate fire prevention and protection measures
- Providing staff with relevant fire safety information and training

Fire risks should be assessed by a competent fire safety specialist across all areas, including stables, foaling units, feed and bedding stores, workshops, offices, and accommodation.

A suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment, carried out by a competent fire specialist, is also a requirement by insurers.

### Fire prevention includes:

- **Electrical systems** should be professionally installed and maintained.
- **Heating appliances** must be suitable for agricultural environments and kept clear of combustible materials.
- **Smoking** should be strictly controlled and restricted to designated areas away from combustible materials.
- **Combustible materials** should be stored appropriately, as these are easily ignited and can exacerbate the spread of fire.
- **Fuel, oils, gas cylinders, and chemicals** should be stored securely in designated, well-ventilated areas away from heat sources.
- **Muck heaps** should be located at least 15 metres (roughly 50 feet) away from stables, barns, or any other buildings to mitigate the risk of spontaneous combustion and fire.

- **Hot works** should be carefully managed and kept away from combustible materials, e.g. hot shoeing or welding.
- **Housekeeping** should be managed to ensure that there is no buildup of combustible materials and escape routes are kept clear.
- **Cooking** should not be left unattended and should only be carried out in designated areas.
- **Portable electrical appliances** should be PAT tested by a competent person and inspected each time before use for signs of damage. PAT testing intervals are determined by risk assessment and will vary depending on the equipment, e.g., a fridge will not need testing as frequently as an extension lead or kettle.
- **Heaters** in tack rooms and communal areas should be positioned away from combustible items, switched off when not in use and only left on overnight if they are designed to do so.
- **Vehicles** should be parked away from buildings and combustible materials.
- **Security arrangements** should be in place to prevent unauthorised access

### Fire detection, equipment, and alarms

Fire detection and alarm systems should be provided where identified by the fire risk assessment. These should be tested regularly. Firefighting equipment, including fire extinguishers and fire blankets, must be appropriate to the risks, clearly signed, accessible, and properly maintained.

Staff should be instructed in basic fire response and the safe use of fire-fighting equipment, with clear guidance that personal safety takes priority.

### Emergency procedures and training

Clear fire emergency procedures must be in place, covering how to raise the alarm, evacuation arrangements, emergency contacts, and assembly points. Procedures should take account of night-time working and foaling seasons.

Evacuation plans must be established for all horses, including the names or numbers of stables and paddocks, with each stabling area clearly linked to its corresponding paddock in case of an emergency. All staff and contractors should receive fire safety information relevant to their role. Fire drills should be carried out periodically to test procedures.

Practical fire extinguisher training is recommended.

### Working with fire and rescue services

Breeders are encouraged to liaise with local Fire and Rescue Services, providing information on site layouts, access routes, water supplies, and the location of horses. Clear signage at site entrances can assist emergency response.

### Summary

Fire safety requires ongoing attention and regular review. By meeting legal duties under the Fire Safety Order 2005 and applying good practice, the risk of fire can be significantly reduced, providing a safer environment for horses, staff, and visitors.

### Useful links

[Hydrant Mapping Tool](#)

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