

Enhancing Sport Horse Welfare in Breeding

Prof. Jane Williams



Why welfare?

How we interact with horses continues to be increasingly questioned

We are all responsible for the physical and mental wellbeing of the horses in our care

WBFSH are committed to:

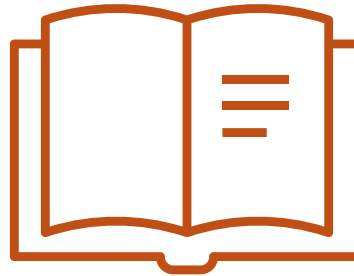
- . Enhancing horse welfare

Supporting their members to promote a sustainable breeding sector

Initial Project: **Evidenced-based recommendations for the enhancement of sports horse welfare in breeding**



STAGE 1
Interviews



STAGE 2
**Systematic
reviews**



STAGE 3
Focus groups

Health rather than welfare

Integrated welfare assessment → inform actions
Before - During – After | Spotlight on individual horse



PHYSICAL HEALTH



PYSCHOLOGICAL HEALTH
Emotions | Affective State
How the horse is feeling/
coping with the
environment

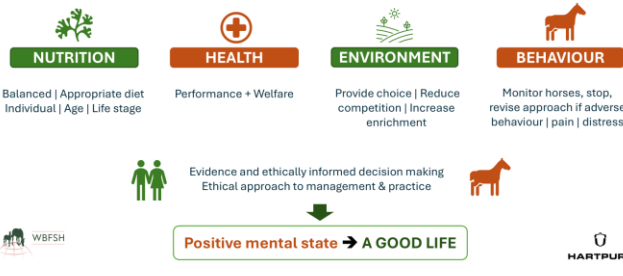


AVOIDING ASSUMPTIONS
‘Well managed’
Plan → Assess → Revisit
Horse’s perspective



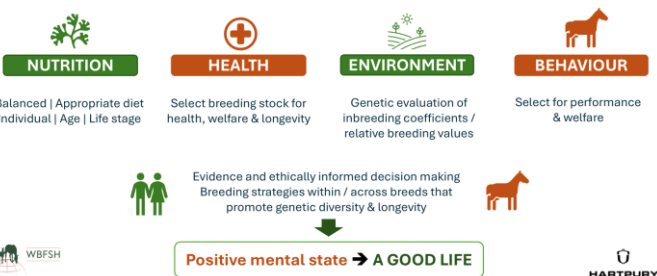
Welfare principle #1

In all circumstances consider and prioritise the welfare of individual horses



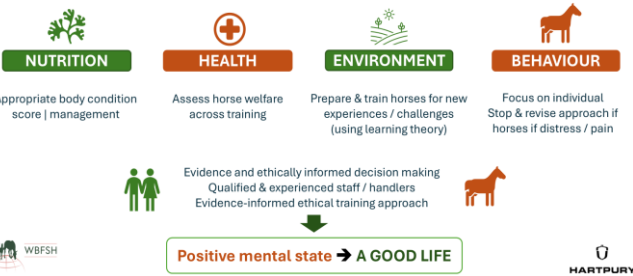
Welfare principle #2

Promote indicators of health, welfare & longevity as well as performance into breeding strategies, breeding stock selection & grading



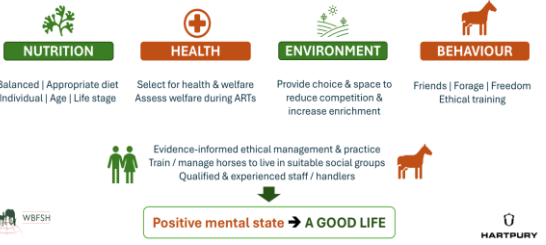
Welfare principle #3

Prepare horses for breeding practices through ethical, evidence informed & age-appropriate training



Welfare principle #4

Engage in responsible and ethical breeding practices that generate a sustainable breeding industry



WBFSH Values – what should they be, a starter for 10!



Respect horses
Prioritise individual horses' needs



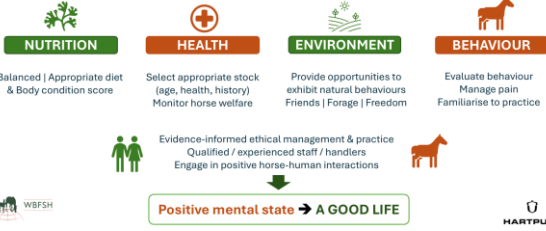
Provide horses with a good life
Give equal consideration to the physical health and mental wellbeing of horses



Prioritise horse welfare
Promote horse's lived experience by providing opportunities to express natural behaviours and choice

Welfare principle #5

Engage in effective & informed health & welfare assessment of individual horses to support robust decision making across breeding practices & management of breeding stock



Be solution driven
Engage in ethical and evidence-informed, pragmatic, responsible and sustainable solutions to individual and global challenges in the breeding sector



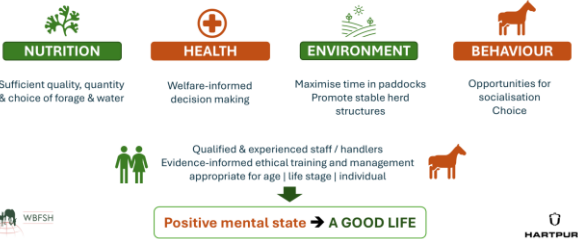
Be trustworthy through transparency & accountability
Engage in ethical and evidence-based decision making informed by regular horse welfare assessment



Be committed to evolve
Be innovative, be curious and keep learning to continue to evolve for a responsible and sustainable breeding industry

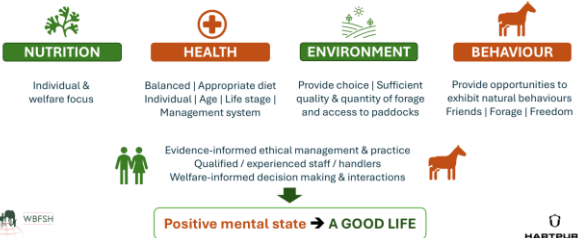
Welfare principle #6

Meet individual horses' needs: Provide horses with friends, forage, & freedom to facilitate function without force by providing mares, stallions & young horses with choice



Welfare principle #7

Provide appropriate nutritional plans for individual horses' life stage & management to optimise welfare & that do not solely prioritise production outputs



Welfare principle #8

Promote progressive weaning approaches to optimise the welfare of foals and mares



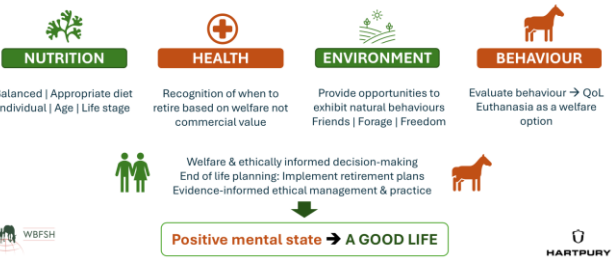
Welfare principle #9

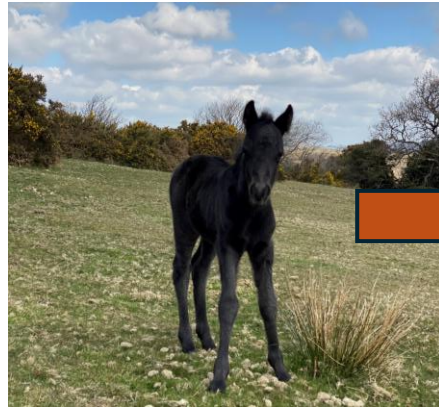
Provide horses with a foundation for a good life through evidence based early handling & training of youngstock / young horses



Welfare principle #10

Commit to ethical and informed lifelong care of breeding stock including effective retirement & end of life planning





**Current
practice**

**Increased connection:
Breeding → Competition**

**Supportive
education**

Next steps...

**Enhancing traceability, transparency
and equine welfare in sport horse
breeding using assisted reproductive
techniques**



PhD



Welfare

**Assisted
Reproductive
Techniques**

Traceability

Transparency

**A holistic
approach to
welfare in ART's**

Proposed PhD programme:



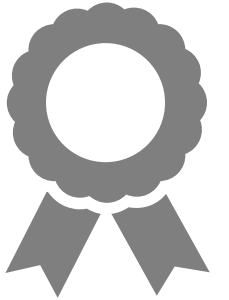
STUDY 1

Survey the scale / scope of current global use of ARTs across different horse breeds & identify drivers behind their use



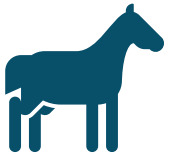
STUDY 2

Understand /evaluate, from individual breeder to studbook level, traceability of ART records, registration practice, cultural, practical and management differences informing practice across different studbooks and countries



STUDY 3

Gain expert consensus to generate 'best practice' guidelines for the management of horses within breeding using ARTs



STUDY 4

Bring together data to provide a holistic measure of horse welfare and inform WBFSh education and evaluation of stud / studbook practice relating to ARTs

Timeline

**PhD ADVERT
LIVE OCT 2025**

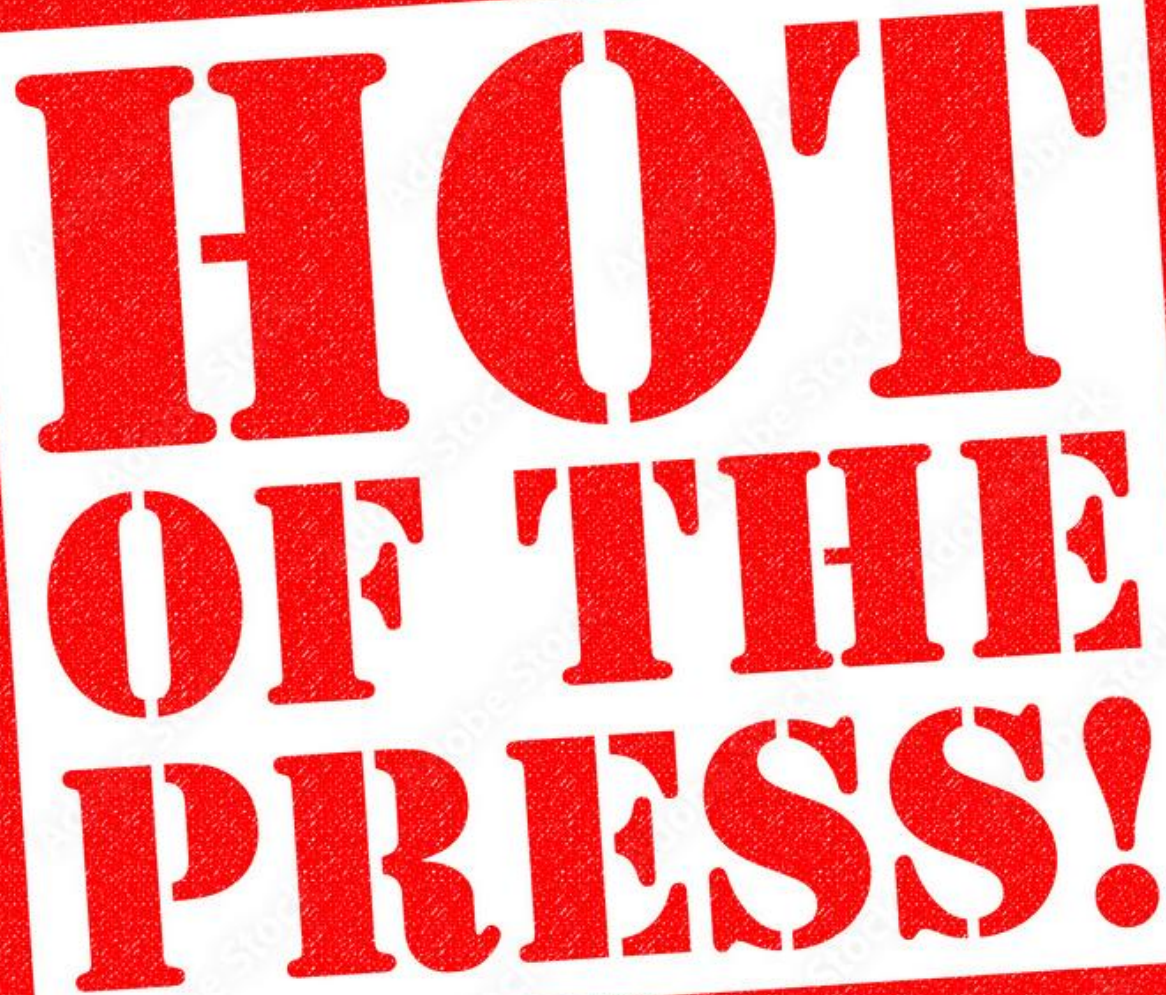
**APPLICATIONS CLOSE
6TH NOV**

**STAGE 2
PANEL INTERVIEWS
WK COMM: 20 NOV
→ OFFER**

**STAGE 1 INTERVIEWS
WBFSH
WK COMM: 15 NOV**

**ENROL
JAN 2026**





**HOT
OF THE
PRESS!**

We have appointed ...

Molly MacBeth

We are really excited to get the project started and looking forward to working with WBFSH and breeding stakeholders at all levels.

We can't do this without you and hope we will get to chat with lots of you along the way.





Thank you & any questions?

We welcome your feedback:

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WBFSH
WORLD BREEDING FEDERATION
FOR SPORT HORSES