

British Horse Society asks horse owners to "Think Before You Breed"

The equestrian sport organization announces a new campaign to promote responsible breeding

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In a press release issued earlier this month, the British Horse Society has announced plans to launch a Responsible Breeding Campaign sponsored by South Essex Insurance Brokers later this year. The BHS cites concerns about a large number of horses and ponies bred in the United Kingdom each year without concern for their futures as the impetus for the campaign.

The horse market has slowed down and rescue centers and sanctuaries are full. With an estimated 1.35 million horses and ponies in the UK, there are simply not enough experienced and knowledgeable homes to cope with the current equine population. The BHS is urging everyone involved with horses to think very carefully before breeding a foal and adding to the problem.

It is not uncommon for horses to reach 30 years of age, and ponies even older, so even with the best of intentions nobody can guarantee a foal a home for life. Whatever the breeder's plan for the foal, it is essential to do everything possible to ensure healthy, high-quality animals are produced that will have a future value on the commercial market.

Too many mare owners put their horse in foal without objectively considering her merit as a commercial broodmare. To their owners all mares are special, but there are many defects and diseases that are hereditary and could be passed on to a foal, limiting its worth. Not all such traits are visible and an alarming number of people go into horse breeding on a whim without sufficient thought to the consequences.

BHS Welfare Senior Executive Lee Hackett said "You only need to visit one of the lower end horse markets to see the impact of equine overproduction – poor quality horses and ponies going for less than the price of a good night out. Our welfare officers have many distressing stories of where these horses end up and I'm sure it's not what their breeders originally intended.

"We are hugely grateful to South Essex Insurance Brokers for their very generous sponsorship of this campaign. Thanks to them we are able to highlight this very genuine equine welfare issue and hopefully encourage people to think carefully before breeding from their horses."

The BHS has several events planned for the campaign that they will announce later in the year.

Read on to learn more about the unwanted horse problem and solutions in the United States.

Follow an organization that is helping to be part of the solution with HorseChannel's blog, Diary of a Horse Rescue.