**For immediate release – 27 March 2020**

**BEF update**

**The current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is constantly changing and evolving with advice and help from the UK Government issued daily. Over the last 48 hours there have been a number of developments which we wanted to update stakeholders on.**

**Government help for the self-employed**

Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced his eagerly awaited support package yesterday which will benefit a number of equestrian sector workers. In simple terms:

* The government will pay the self-employed a taxable grant worth 80% of their average monthly profits over the last three years up to £2500 per month
* The grant will be available for three months and will be extended if necessary
* People can claim these grants and continue to do business
* The aim is to pay at the beginning of June (three months backdated) directly into your bank account.

The grants will be available to anyone who meets all the criteria:

* Be self-employed or a member of partnership;
* Have lost trading/partnership trading profits due to COVID-19;
* File a tax return for 2018-19 as self-employed or a member of a trading partnership. Those who have not yet filed for 2018-19 will have an additional four weeks from this announcement to do so;
* Have traded in 2019-20; be currently trading at the point of application (or would be except for COVID 19) and intend to continue to trade in the tax year 2020 to 2021
* Have trading profits of less than £50,000 and more than half of your total income come from self-employment. **This can be with reference to at least one of the following conditions:**
	+ Your trading profits and total income in 2018/19
	+ Your average trading profits and total income across up to the three years between 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19.

What do you need to do to access a grant?

HMRC will contact you directly and you’ll have to fill out a form to indicate your business has been impacted by the pandemic.

Businesses set up since April 2019 won’t be eligible as there will be no filed tax return on record. For these new start-ups, there is other help available such as Universal Credit if you hold savings below £16,000 and business continuity loans where they have a business bank account.

Further information and details of the scheme will be released shortly by HMRC and we’ll pass on any relevant information.

Further Details can be found at - [**https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-gives-support-to-millions-of-self-employed-individuals**](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-gives-support-to-millions-of-self-employed-individuals)

**Government Whatsapp**

The government has launched a free to use Whatsapp service to push out their official advice and help with the most commonly asked questions around coronavirus.

To get started, simply add 07860 064422 in your phone contacts and then message the word ‘hi’ in a WhatsApp message to get started.

Further details from: whatsapp?fbclid=IwAR1D5VQXj2fHEbxD8P7lQm8lRiczgab8YrmXnIKyLGp54ckA3PIZvBdPnmQ

**British Equestrian Trade Association advice**

A number of British Equestrian Trade Association members are reporting high levels of buying of feed and bedding, almost to panic buying status. The message is very much that supply level is more than adequate if consumers continue to buy reasonably.

The sector is viewed as ‘essential industry’ so can continue running as normal under the current restrictions. Feed and bedding manufacturing is working as normal on the whole so the supply is in place to meet demand – there’s enough to go around if you buy sensibly.

**British Equestrian Veterinary Association (BEVA)**

BEVA has issued guidance for the veterinary profession on the level of service they should be offering so horse owners can be clear on the position. In a bid to protect human health and follow the government recommendations, they will work towards maintaining as 24-hour emergency service only. This means they are advising all non-essential and routine work to be stopped.

Vets are being asked to consider telephone and video consultations and where a physical examination is necessary, the owner/handler/trainer should declare they are free from coronavirus

BEVA is working with a number of other bodies on the status equine influenza booster vaccinations as this will have an impact on horses in competition and racing. An update will be issued next week on the position.

Routine stud and reproductive work is being looked at for further guidance.

**British Farriers and Blacksmiths Association (BFBA)**

The BFBA has issued guidance to its members in consultation with BEVA, World Horse Welfare and The Horse Trust. Farriery is considered essential work and they have introduced a traffic light system to help with which appointments to attend. Non-crucial hoofcare should be avoided if there is no risk of long term effects, where horses require time-sensitive appointments on welfare/soundness issues consideration should be given as advisory hoofcare and then where by not attending there may be serious detrimental effects on the horse, defined as crucial hoofcare.

Farriers have been instructed to:

* Call ahead to verify that no one present is ill or has been in contact with anyone who is ill.
* No more than one owner or carer should be in attendance at appointments and should tie the horse up and then immediately move away to a safe distance
* Observe the current coronavirus hygiene guidance.

A number of horse owners are considering ‘roughing off’ horses with their farrier’s advice and this may require moving horses to different locations. We would advise that, on welfare grounds, this would be permissible as in the long run it would lessen journeys and contact. Please ensure you maintain the two metre rule and only have two people maximum involved in the move.

**Riding**

Government has not issued any restrictions on riding but we would continue to urge everyone to carefully consider the risks and what is ‘essential’ and not ride. The emergency and health services are working at full capacity to combat the virus and as a community we shouldn’t add to that burden. If you choose to ride, we’d strongly suggest avoiding activity with heightened risk and keeping to your own property.

The BEF will continue to provide regular updates as the situation is ever changing with new information, clarification and updates coming through. Here are some links from our colleagues you may find helpful:

BHS - https://www.bhs.org.uk/

WHW - https://www.worldhorsewelfare.org/

BEVA - https://www.beva.org.uk/coronavirus

BFBA - https://www.forgeandfarrier.co.uk/bfba/index.htm

BGA - https://britishgrooms.org.uk/coronavirus

EEA - https://equestrianemployers.org.uk/coronavirus