

Written evidence submitted by the British Horse Society (SDV0004)

The British Horse Society (BHS) is the largest equine charity in the UK. Two of our primary objectives are:

- **To promote and advance the education, training and safety of the public in all matters relating to the horse**
- **To promote and secure the provision, protection and preservation of rights of way and of access for ridden and driven horses over public roads, highways, footpaths, bridleways, carriageways, public paths and other land.**

The British Horse Society has 118,000 members and the Safety Team provides advice and acts for the safety of all equestrians on roads (not just our members) in the UK. The BHS Safety Team was part of the Highway Code Review Stakeholders Group that saw recent significant changes to the Highway Code, that advised drivers on how to pass horses safely on the road. This advice contained the British Horse Society's Dead Slow campaign messages and gave drivers specific detail on maximum speed (10mph) and distance (2m) when passing horses, horse drawn carriages or feral or semi feral ponies (Dartmoor/New Forest).

In 2021 nearly 3,000 road incidents were reported to the BHS, 66 horses were killed, and over one hundred riders and horses injured. 80% of these incidents were because vehicles were travelling too fast or too close to the horse. To date 9/8/22 there have already been over 2,000 road incidents reported to the BHS in 2022.

For the past two years the BHS has been trying to engage with 'Self Drive Vehicle' professionals and has asked the question: "How do/will autonomous vehicles assess ridden horses and semi feral ponies on the road and what programming has been developed to increase the safety of equestrians on the road?"

To date the British Horse Society has not had any detailed answer, and in fact it would appear that the unique characteristics of a horse/pony have not been considered yet, or at least that is the perception of the BHS Safety Team.

Part of your request for evidence is one that addresses-

Safety and perceptions of safety, including the relationship with other road users such as pedestrians, cyclists and conventionally driven vehicles.

I would absolutely ask that equestrians are included in the list alongside pedestrians and cyclists, in the same way that equestrians were included in the recent Highway Code changes.

It is not clear to the BHS Safety Team that consideration has been given to the way horses may react or behave on a road that is unlike any other animal. Horse and rider are the vulnerable road user together and should be considered as such. A self-drive vehicle will need specific programming to enable it to recognise horse behaviour and ensure the recent Highway Code advice is adhered to.

The British Horse Society is able to help with development and is keen to ensure the safety of equestrians in this deployment of self-drive vehicles.

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