

EFC DIRECTORY LISTED EQUINE FITTER

CODE OF CONDUCT & PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

1 INTRODUCTION

This Code has been adopted to support the professional practice of Equine Fitters who have applied successfully for inclusion in the Directory of Equine Fitters (the Directory) and who, by so doing, submit to the jurisdiction of the Equine Fitters Council (the Council) and accept its regulatory authority.

The Council owns the Directory and controls who may be listed in it. The Directory is administered by a Registrar who reports to the Council.

A **Code of Conduct**, governing client relationships, is more rigorous, in that the guidelines become mandates. Those who choose to be governed by the Code of Conduct must follow exactly what is set down within the code, compliance is obligatory.

A **Code of Professional Practice** sets standards for the activities of individuals who elect to work in a particular area or provide a particular service. It sets out, by way of guidance, how the people who make up that industry or profession should operate.

A Code of Conduct and Professional Practice is typically developed in areas that are not regulated by government. Adopting the Code reflects an undertaking to operate in such a way that humans and equids are treated consistently, fairly, safely, and legally. It demonstrates recognition of the responsibilities that follow when a person claims some specialist knowledge, skill, or ability to perform a particular task or operation for which they are rewarded.

A Code of Conduct permits the operation of a disciplinary process if individuals, who have signed up to the Code, transgress. This creates confidence in a governing body's ability to regulate the activities of those who submit to its jurisdiction.

2 PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT (about actions)

The Code of Professional Conduct sets out the professional responsibilities of equine fitters. Supporting guidance ⁽ⁱ⁾, issued from time to time, amplifies these responsibilities. The Code and supporting guidance are essential to support the proper regulation of equine fitters.

2.1 Professional competence

- Equine fitters must prioritise the health and welfare of the horse and the safety of the rider. They must ensure the service they provide is appropriate and adequate.
- Equine fitters must be properly trained through supervised learning and must confine their practice to areas where their training and experience are sufficient to enable them to provide a competent, professional, and safe fitting service.
- Equine fitters must only provide advice where they are competent to do so and must refer to other equine professionals where appropriate.
- Equine fitters must maintain and develop their knowledge and skills through a commitment to Continuous Professional Development and must comply with any registration or listing requirements by engaging with CPD and refresher training.
- Equine fitters must possess sufficient knowledge and skills to handle equines safely, sensitively, and ethically. They must never discipline or punish an equine.

2.2 Honesty and integrity

- Equine fitters must be open and honest with clients and respect their needs and circumstances. They must always explain to the client the basis for any fitting decision they make.
- Equine fitters must provide appropriate and adequate information to clients about their business, including the cost of services.

- An equine fitter must respond promptly, fully, and courteously to clients' complaints and criticism. Clients must be provided with the fitter's written procedure for dealing with complaints before a service is provided.
- An equine fitter must respond promptly, fully, and courteously to client enquiries or requests for information or information sharing with other members of the horse-human care team.
- A person applying to be listed as an Equine fitter, must disclose to the Registrar any caution or conviction, including absolute and conditional discharges and spent convictions, or adverse finding which may affect registration or their fitness to practise, whether in the UK or overseas (except for minor offences excluded from disclosure by the Council).
- Listed Equine fitters, and those applying to be listed in the Directory of Equine Fitters, must comply with reasonable requests from the Council and must comply with any undertakings they may be required to give to the Council.
- Equine fitters must comply with the spirit and the letter of any legislation relevant to the scope of their activities.

2.3 Independence and impartiality

- An Equine fitter must exercise personal and independent judgement. They must provide independent and impartial advice and inform a client of any conflict of interest or commercial arrangement which would limit their freedom to provide such advice impartially.
- An Equine fitter who promotes or advertises ancillary products and services must do so in a professional manner.

2.4 Client confidentiality and trust

- Equine fitters must respect client confidentiality and not disclose information about a client or the client's animal to a third party, unless the client gives permission or animal welfare or the public interest may be compromised by a failure to disclose.

- Nothing in this Code shall prevent the reporting of a notifiable disease where there is a legal responsibility to do so.

2.5 Professional accountability

- Equine fitters must adhere to minimum standards of health & safety; their hygiene practice must include an awareness of transferable diseases and corresponding bio-security measures.
- Equine fitters must ensure that all their professional activities are covered by adequate Public Liability insurance or equivalent arrangements.
- Equine fitters must work in partnership with others where the welfare of the equine requires such collaboration.
- An Equine fitter must ensure that tasks are delegated only to those who have the appropriate competence and training to execute them.
- Equine fitters must act with integrity in their relationships with clients and professional colleagues and must not engage in any activity or behaviour that would be likely to bring the profession into disrepute or undermine public confidence in the profession.

2.6 Professional responsibilities

- An Equine fitter must keep clear, accurate and detailed client records including appropriate measurements and financial records.
- Equine fitters must communicate effectively with clients and other professionals and ensure informed consent is obtained where this might be required.
- An Equine fitter who is concerned about a colleague's fitness to practise must take steps to ensure that equines are not put at risk and that the interests of the public are protected.

- An Equine fitter must not claim to be a specialist or an advanced fitting practitioner unless they have undertaken training that manifestly and objectively corresponds with that claim.
- An Equine Fitter must tell the Registrar if a complaint against them is upheld. By submitting their application for listing, an Equine Fitter agrees that their representative body shall inform the Registrar if a complaint against the practitioner is upheld
- An Equine fitter must provide the Council with their training and CPD records when requested to do so.
- Equine fitters must pay the Council such annual subscription as is required of them to maintain their listing in the Directory within 2 weeks of it being demanded.
- Listed Equine Fitters may display the Listed Equine Fitters kitemark in accordance with the guidelines set out.

3 ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

A **Code of Professional Practice** for Equine Fitters sets out the ethical principles that govern the practice of equine fitting and decisions a fitter is called upon to make. The goal is to enable fitters to make decisions that are in line with certain stated values.

Ethics are about the values and principles which underpin the judgment calls we make. Ethics inform professional practice and in turn permit the development of a Code of Conduct which governs actions.

The priority of equine fitters is the welfare of the equine whom they will treat at all times with kindness and respect. Beyond that Equine Fitters: –

- a) are humane and considerate in how they treat and deal with equines and humans.
- b) recognise that frustration can impact a person's ability to cope and communicate, and in turn can lead to conflict or harmful behaviour. They

identify and deal with causes of frustration to prevent them from escalating into problems – particularly where the welfare of the animal is concerned.

- c) are inclusive and treat fairly people of all backgrounds and identities.
- d) are alert to language and behaviour that can be received as harassment, inappropriate or intrusive. They avoid language that is threatening or hurtful, discriminatory, or demeaning in their dealings with others.
- e) recognise that accommodating different views is part of their professional responsibility.
- f) understand the importance of making the right call for the welfare of the animal, the duty owed to the client, and the duty owed to the equine fitting profession.
- g) give proper consideration to how their actions affect the welfare and livelihoods of others.
- h) recognise that their reputation and that of their profession depends on their personal integrity and professionalism as well as their competence.
- i) are alert to relationships and activities that impact on their ability to make objective and fair decisions.
- j) avoid actions and communications that may be harmful or detrimental to colleagues or bring their profession into disrepute.
- k) do not allow commercial concerns to override professional judgement, equine welfare, or rider safety.

ⁱ Supporting evidence will be referenced in endnotes.