



WEST MIDLANDS DRIVING GROUP: CLUB RULES

The West Midlands Driving Group will be referred to as WMDG hereafter. WMDG is a grass roots driving group to encourage safe and pleasurable carriage driving, with training and instruction at the forefront of the Club's activities. Activities are many and varied throughout the summer months from social events without our equine friends, to drives, treasure hunts, fun days and trials type events, interspersed with training and practice days. Rules appertaining to individual events will be included with programmes and schedules.

The Committee and Event Organiser are putting a great deal of effort into taking reasonable precautions to ensure the Health and Safety of everyone present. This can only be effective, however, if everyone present plays their own part in helping to avoid and prevent accidents. Please obey the instructions of the organiser and all officials and stewards. No matter how experienced you consider yourself please read and remember the following safety rules. Anyone causing injury to persons or damage to property as a consequence of an action in breach of any of these safety rules may be personally liable in negligence to the insured person and/or owner of the damaged property.

Carriage Driving may not be very high on the list of dangerous activities but, nevertheless, there is always scope for accidents to happen when a lot of people and horses are gathered together in a confined space. Accidents that do happen, however, are usually the result of someone failing to observe the simple and sensible safety rules that we all learnt before ever contemplating taking part in such events. The following is a summary of the more important rules that everyone must observe at all times, and they apply at all events. There are no exceptions. Members should read these and be fully aware of them.

SUMMARY OF RULES

1. All members must have Third Party Public Liability Insurance and this must be declared on membership forms. Up to date proof will be required at the beginning of each season. Non Members must also provide proof of insurance. Where policies expire mid-season a renewal must be shown before the next event.
2. All horses/ponies must be 4 years of age and over.
3. Hard hats are compulsory at all events, and body protectors on obstacle phase of trials type events.
4. Hi-Viz clothing to be worn on Public Highways.
5. Non Members will be assessed prior to their first event and a Buddy (more experienced member) will be on hand to advise and help at their first event.
6. New members will be strongly advised to attend training days.
7. Carriages may be 2 or 4 wheeled. 4 wheeled carriages must be fitted with a brake.
8. Pneumatic tyres are allowed.
9. Minimum width for trials type events is 125cm. Axle extensions are not allowed to make this minimum width.

10. Carriages will be measured.
11. Harness may be leather, webbing or other materials which may be used in all competitions provided it is safe, clean, a good fit and in good condition. Auxiliary reins and martingales are not permitted.
12. All horses/ponies must be fitted with an appropriate bit. (Bitless not allowed).
13. Under halters to be worn at all events and lead rope carried. An appropriate spares kit is strongly advised.
14. All turnouts to have an able bodied groom.
15. Turnouts under 10 hands may have a groom on foot at trials type events.
16. Minimum age for juniors is 10 years. Juniors 10-12 years must have dual reins fitted.
17. Juniors under 18 years must have a capable adult whip as a groom.
18. Horses/ponies must have up to date certificates of vaccination correctly completed for the animal in question and be taken to each event entered. These will be inspected.
19. In all competitions drivers and grooms must be neatly dressed. Gloves to be worn. Whips to be carried.
20. Shorts are not allowed in competitions.
21. Anyone riding a horse/pony at the venue of an event, whether in an official capacity or not, must wear a properly secured hard hat.
22. Lunging only allowed at organiser's discretion.
23. All dogs must be kept on leads. The owners of dogs found roaming unattended at any event may be excluded from taking any further part in the event. This rule applies to dogs brought to events by competitors, grooms, officials, helpers and spectators.
24. In the interest of safety, competitors are recommended to leave a space of at least 12 feet between their horse-box/equipment of other competitors. It is compulsory to carry a fire extinguisher at events.
25. In the interest of overall safety and in the interest of the image of the sport the group reserves the right to review the behaviour and competence of all entrants at group events and the suitability of their horses/ponies and turnouts. No member or their groom/helpers shall commit any act or conduct themselves in a manner which is, in the reasonable opinion of the group's chairman and committee, unsportsmanlike, prejudicial to the interests of the group or liable to bring the group or sport into disrepute.
26. Where a competitor, horse or pony, is involved in an incident at a group event which gives cause for concern on safety grounds, the organiser appointed to the event will report details of the incident to the group chairman and confirm to the competitor in writing that they have done so.
27. The group chairman on receipt of an incident report as a result of the above will nominate two further committee members to join them on a sub-committee to investigate the incident.
28. If the sub-committee having fully investigated the reported incident find that the behaviour of the competitor, the horse/pony, or a combination, give rise to serious concerns about safety at future events they may, at their sole discretion, take whatever action they consider necessary to maintain safety standards at future events. This may include, if thought appropriate, refusing further entries from that competitor, or entries involving the horse/pony under investigation, for a period of up to the end of the season in which the incident occurred.
29. Upon completion of any investigation, the chairman will set out the sub-committee's findings in writing to the competitor involved, together with their recommendation, if any. The sub-committee's decision is final.

30. Any competitor who has reason to dispute or query any judgement or results should refer the matter to the organiser at the earliest opportunity, no later than 30 minutes after the end of the event.
31. WMDG has its own system of categorising competitors into Beginners, Novices and Open status.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

32. Never leave a horse/pony harnessed to a vehicle without either a driver in control of the reins or a groom holding the bridle.
33. Never tie up a horse/pony whilst harnessed to a vehicle.
34. Never remove the reins or any part of the bridle of any horse/pony whilst it is harnessed to a vehicle.
35. A competent driver (whip) must be on the box and fully in control of the reins before anyone else gets on board or until everyone has alighted from the vehicle.
36. Do not put your horse/pony to until you are ready to drive. Always take it out as soon as you have finished driving. The traces should always be secured before, and undone after the breeching and any other connections.
37. Always proceed at walk in the box park and other crowded areas.
38. Check your harness and vehicle before every event to ensure it is sound and unlikely to break.
39. Have your harness and vehicle properly adjusted before coming to an event. Do not risk adjusting it when you and your horse/pony are all keyed up and ready to go.
40. Always remember that a horse/pony which has limited experience of coming to events is likely to get excited. Do not assume it will behave as predictably as it does at home.
41. Never try to 'school' a young horse at an event. If you have an inexperienced horse that is likely to get excited, try to pick a quiet corner of the box park, as far as possible from the centre of activity.
42. Remember that where a loose horse running free in a crowded box park may be something of a hazard, one racing around with a carriage behind is positively lethal.
43. If you have the misfortune to get tipped out during a competition (something that happens to us all at one time or another) try to keep hold of the reins; so long as you have them in your hands you have some chance of regaining control.
44. NEVER strap small children into a carriage. You may think it will stop them falling out. If you do get tipped over and the horse bolts, falling out will be the least of their problems.
45. When exercising at an event hard hats must be worn by everyone on the carriage.
46. It is the driver's responsibility (except Junior whips) to ensure their groom is of sufficient physical stature and experience so that they are able to provide real assistance, rapidly, in the event of an emergency.
47. The driver (except juniors) is at all times responsible for the safety of the turnout. If they dismount for any reason they must ensure the person left in charge is competent.