



## Social Media and Internet Policy

Social media is a powerful communication tool for us as a charity. It can raise awareness and funds and help us to reach a wide audience much more quickly than traditional methods of communication.

There are also risks linked with the fast pace of social media. It can be impossible to undo inappropriate or harmful content. Even if a post is removed, it may already have been shared. People's professional and personal lives can be severely damaged as a result of inappropriate behaviour on social media, so some controls are necessary.

The Charity Commission recommends that registered charities which use social media put in place a policy so that they have the necessary internal controls appropriate and proportionate for the charity's needs.

### 1. How the Society uses social media to further our charity's objects and purpose

The IDHS (GB) has a website which describes the work of our charity and acts as a signpost for the public to find the information that they need.

The content and presentation of the website is reviewed from time to time, to keep it up to date and relevant. This work is overseen by the Council's Marketing Group, in consultation with the Council.

Updates to the site, and to Facebook, must be approved by the trustees within the workgroup or sub-group responsible for the area concerned, as detailed below:

- Official Society announcements in relation to elections, policy and other governance matters: Finance and Governance group – [governance@idhsqb.org.uk](mailto:governance@idhsqb.org.uk)
- Marketing, newsletter, yearbook and publicity updates: [marketing@idhsqb.org.uk](mailto:marketing@idhsqb.org.uk)
- Updates relating to breeding policy, registrations, passports, classifications of animals and inspections: Breeding, registration and inspection group – [inspections@idhsqb.org.uk](mailto:inspections@idhsqb.org.uk)
- Updates in relation to the National Championship Show: [Showteam@idhsqb.org.uk](mailto:Showteam@idhsqb.org.uk)
- Updates in relation to affiliated shows: [affiliations@idhsqb.org.uk](mailto:affiliations@idhsqb.org.uk)
- Information for judges and those who wish to apply for a judges' assessment: [judges@idhsqb.org.uk](mailto:judges@idhsqb.org.uk)

The Society also has an official **Facebook page**. The Council uses this page to communicate with the members and the wider public about any matters of interest, events and important changes. Members may post comments in response to notices on this page.

The Society runs a **Facebook Group**, which is a friendly forum for members and non-members to share their interests in the Irish Draught horse and the Irish Draught Sport Horse.

### 2. Society members' conduct on social media and internet sites

Members may not post material on social media which could damage the reputation of the Society or its members, or which is prejudicial to the Society's interests.

While constructive feedback is welcomed, any negative comments about individual trustees, officers, workgroups or events should be addressed to the group concerned, or if this does not resolve the matter, through the formal Complaints Procedure.

### *Official posts about events*

Members should not post material relating to the organisation of any of the Society's events unless they have been authorised to do so, because there is a risk that this information may be incorrect or misleading. Official announcements must come from the workgroup concerned, or from the Council. Members are encouraged to post links to official posts.

### *Personal data and security matters*

Members should not post personal data about other people online, such as addresses, phone numbers or email addresses. This is an infringement of personal privacy. If you need to say something in confidence, then privately message or email the person concerned.

Please think before you post, and be aware of safety and security. For example, avoid mentioning that someone connected to the Society is on holiday for two weeks, as this could place their property at risk. If you are on holiday, post about it when you get back, not when your house is unattended!

### *Personal disputes and complaints*

We strongly discourage members and others from using our social media pages to air grievances about the Society, other organisations or any individuals.

Anyone with a legitimate complaint about the Society should access the Complaints Procedure, available online at [www.idhsgb.org.uk](http://www.idhsgb.org.uk). If you post concerns on social media or otherwise in public, and then raise a complaint, your post could prejudice the conduct, quality and outcome of any investigation.

### *Misuse of our sites to spread personal agendas*

Political statements and shares of controversial, graphic, distressing or otherwise inappropriate material are not permitted on any of our pages. We want to be inclusive and welcome members and site visitors OF ALL AGES, so there should be nothing on our sites that could not be viewed by a young child.

### *Rules for our Facebook Group*

Our Facebook Group page has its own rules regarding user conduct. This page is moderated to ensure that the rules are adhered to. The current rules for our Facebook Group include:

**No hate speech or bullying:** Make sure that everyone feels safe. Bullying of any kind isn't allowed, and degrading comments about race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, gender or identity will not be tolerated.

**Be kind and courteous:** We're all in this together to create a welcoming environment worthy of this great breed. Let's treat everyone with respect. Healthy debates are natural, but kindness is required.

**Administrators' obligation to the group:** Page Administrators will remove all posts that violate the good spirit of the group and/or its members. Repeat offenders will be suspended and /or permanently removed.

**No airing of personal grievances:** Private disputes, whether they are between members or not, must not be aired on the group.

**Horse sales advertisements are not permitted:** The IDHS (GB) website is available for all your sale horses and wanted adverts. Facebook does not permit sales ads.

**No blocking is allowed on our Facebook Group:** all posts in the group must be viewable to all members. The privacy setting must be open. No anonymous members are allowed, and any member not willing for all to see their posts and identity will be removed.

## **3. Guidelines around the conduct of trustees, staff and volunteers when using social media on behalf of the IDHS (GB)**

Trustees and non-elected officers must comply with all the rules relating to members. In addition, they should work as part of the workgroups to which they are assigned, and consult the rest of the relevant group members before making a post which relates to Society business.

Most groups have one or two people who are nominated to write posts. They are effectively press officers for that group and have a responsibility to ensure that messages are accurate and appropriate.

Once the initial message has been agreed, group members can post factual updates (such as 'only two weeks to go now until the closing date for show entries') without further consultation, but any new statements, such as a significant change in registration policy or postponement of an event, must be agreed by the group concerned.

Those holding office within the Society, for example trustees and non-elected officers, should ensure that they set a good example. They should not post their own opinions in such a way that the reader might think they are speaking on behalf of the Society.

#### **4. Who is responsible for the day-to-day management of our social media pages?**

The Council has overall responsibility for the management of our social media pages. Moderation is delegated to a group of members who are not necessarily trustees, who are chosen for their skills in this area of work.

#### **5. What you should do if things go wrong**

If any person is on the receiving end of any form of inappropriate or indecent behaviour on social media or through emails, they should take dated screen shots of the material.

If the offending post is on our Facebook Group, the chances are that it will be spotted quickly, but just in case, please privately message the moderators straight away, through the group pages.

If you believe that a criminal offence may have been committed or that someone may be at risk of harm, inform the Police on 101 as well as contacting the Society. Examples of offences include communications which constitute hate crime or which are malicious, threatening, indecent or grossly offensive.

In all instances where criminal activity is *not* suspected, forward the post by screenshot to the Finance and Governance Group at [governance@idhsgb.org.uk](mailto:governance@idhsgb.org.uk).

Any such reports made to the Finance and Governance Group will be regarded as formal complaints. They will be investigated under the Complaints Procedure unless there is an alleged criminal offence, such as harassment. In the latter case, the matter will not be investigated internally unless, or until, the Police confirm that they will not be taking action.

#### **6. The potential consequences of inappropriate conduct**

Any person who is found to be engaging in any breach of this Code may be subject to disciplinary measures. These may include the person concerned having their membership of a group or of the Society suspended pending an investigation.

If the concerns are substantiated, the Council may decide to remove or refuse the person's membership in line with Article 7 (4) of our Articles of Association.

#### **7. How we ensure that trustees, staff and volunteers responsible for managing the charity's social media channels are familiar with the charity's social media policy.**

All trustees, new trustees and non-elected officers will be given a copy of the policy and will be asked to sign to confirm they have read and understood it. They will be informed when any updates are made. All our policies are reviewed annually. This policy will also be available on our website.

*Review date: February 2025*