



IRISH DRAUGHT HORSE SOCIETY (GB)

Registered Charity No. 1080522

Social Media and Internet Policy

1. Introduction

The IDHS (GB) understands that the internet and social media sites can play an important part in people's daily lives. The Society uses social media as a powerful communication tool which can raise awareness and help us to reach a wide audience quickly and economically.

There are 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.

The Charity Commission recommends that registered charities put a policy in place to help ensure that they have the necessary internal controls appropriate for the charity's needs.

2. Disclosure:

People who use social media inappropriately may run the risk of civil and/or criminal proceedings being brought against them. The public should be aware that the Society must co-operate with any law enforcement authorities or court order requesting or directing us to disclose the identity or locate anyone posting any material in breach of this policy.

3. Who is (and is not) covered by this policy?

This policy applies only to members of the IDHS (GB). Members should be aware that failure to adhere to this policy could lead to disciplinary action being taken in line with our Articles of Association and Disciplinary Policy. The IDHS (GB) has no authority over, or ability to discipline anyone who is not a member of the Society.

Personal disputes are not covered by this policy. Personal disputes can only be resolved by the parties concerned, if necessary with the help of a qualified legal professional (instructed by the parties concerned) and/or law enforcement agencies.

The Society has no jurisdiction over public social media groups run by private individuals. If you are offended by a post on one of those groups, contact the Admin for the group concerned, or contact the social media platform where the post appears.

4. The types of social media we use

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

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. <https://www.facebook.com/IDHSGB>

The Society runs a **Facebook Official Forum 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.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/928909631249104>

Both the Society's own Facebook page and the Official Forum are carefully moderated. The current rules for our Facebook pages are:

- **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.

5. How the Society investigates concerns relating to social media use

There are certain circumstances where IDHS (GB) trustees may carry out, in a reasonable and proportionate manner, searches to identify posts which may be in breach of this policy.

Repeated or protracted searches of individuals' social media pages are not lawful. However, if a complaint is received about a person's conduct on social media, the investigator may carry out a proportionate search of their pages.

The Society may also carry out a one-off check of social media in relation to candidates for Council elections, in the same way that a prospective employer might do so.

6. General rules about social media use

Members must ensure any material they post to social media complies with all the rules stated below.

Specifically, members may not post material which could damage the name or reputation of IDHS (GB), its officials or other members, or which is derogatory to or prejudicial to the interests of the Society.

Do not post any material which:

- Is threatening, defamatory, obscene, indecent, seditious, offensive, pornographic, abusive, liable to incite racial hatred, discriminatory, menacing, scandalous, inflammatory, blasphemous;
- Is in breach of confidence, in breach of privacy or which may cause annoyance, distress or inconvenience;
- in breach of the Society's operating rules;
- is destructive, negative or actively undermines the official work of the Society or its members;
- constitutes a criminal offence;
- could give rise to civil liability;
- infringes the rights of any third party;
- relates to an active complaint:

Members should not use social media to air grievances about the Society, other organisations or any individuals. Society officials are not permitted to respond to grievances and complaints in public. If you have a concern or a complaint, please see the Complaints Procedure on our website or contact the Finance and Governance Group on governance@idhs.gb.org.uk

In addition:

- Members may not post notices which relate to the organisation of any of the Society's official events, unless they have been authorised to do so. Official announcements must come from the workgroup concerned, or from the Council.
- Members may not disclose personal data or other details which could place someone at risk, such as other people's addresses, phone numbers or email addresses.
- Political statements and shares of controversial, graphic, distressing or otherwise inappropriate material.
- Posts should make it clear that the member is stating their own personal view, unless the member has been authorised by the Council to make that statement.
- Children and young people under the age of 18 years must never be photographed, or photographs posted online, without the written permission of someone with parental responsibility.
- IDHS (GB) produced images are the subject of copyright and should not be copied or used in social media unless written permission has been sought and obtained from the originator.

- (o) Members are not permitted to publish results or audio recordings taken at Society inspections, which are confidential environments. They may photograph or video their own horse from outside the arena, but not animals belonging to other people.
- (p) Judges' Assessment Days are confidential. Audio and video of any officials' deliberations and feedback to participants is not permitted.
- (q) Judges and inspectors must not post on social media any invitations to judge and inspect, or the results of such shows and inspections. Official show and inspection results are published online as soon as they have been confirmed and authorised by the workgroup responsible. Please see also the Judges' Rules.

7. What you should do if things go wrong

If the offending post is on our own Facebook Group, it will probably be spotted quickly. If you are concerned about a post, 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.

Any such reports made to the Finance and Governance Group will be regarded as potential 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.

8. The potential consequences of inappropriate conduct

The Society can request, but cannot compel people to remove posts from their own pages. However, members of the Society are personally accountable for everything they place in the public domain.

Any member who is found to be in breach of this policy 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 our Articles of Association.

Paragraph 3 above states that personal disputes can only be resolved by the parties concerned, if necessary with the help of a qualified legal professional instructed by the parties concerned and/or law enforcement agencies. When that process is complete, the Society may decide to review the information available to determine whether the disciplinary process needs to be invoked.

Under no circumstances will the Society take action until any legal processes are complete.

9. 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.

10. Accessibility

This policy forms part of the Society's Operating Rules and is publicly available on our website. All our policies are reviewed annually.

Review date: October 2026