**BSPS Protocol for warming up horses at BSPS shows, events and affiliated classes.**   
Updated 15/07/2025 – Version 5  
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﻿BSPS Protocol for “warming up horses and ponies” at BSPS shows, events and affiliated classes. This covers any time a horse/pony is ridden on a showground and includes days when the horse/pony is not competing. This protocol applies to members and non-members, (non-members can compete in some BSPS classes and must abide by BSPS rules).   
  
Competitors must be aware that shows or event centres may have their own rules regarding working in that exceeds the requirements in this protocol, they must be adhered to.  
  
1. The BSPS takes the welfare of horses and ponies very seriously. Warming up, therefore, needs to be carried out with the welfare of horses/ponies as a top priority.   
  
2. Warming up is essential to prepare horse/ponies to compete. It offers familiarisation to new surroundings, warms up horse/ponies to ensure they are supple, relaxed and the rider and horse or pony are prepared and given confidence to compete successfully.   
  
3. There are 3 types of working in that are allowed.  
a) ridden in by a rider.   
b) lunged.  
c) long reined.  
  
4) Duration.   
  
Horses/ponies should be warmed up for an appropriate amount of time depending on their age, level of fitness, maturity and the surface on which they are being worked and the prevailing weather conditions. It is good practice to ensure a horse/pony is walked to allow it to settle and stretch before it commences more strenuous exercise. To have adequate breaks and time to cool down after exercise, including being washed down appropriately and hydrated frequently.   
  
5. Ridden in by a rider.

Consideration should be given to the rider weight ratio for all riders, whether warming-up and / or competing. This is a very delicate topic, and it is appreciated that there is a safety consideration with the atmosphere at Shows when young or inexperienced riders will be competing, but welfare must be a priority. Research shows that an appropriately conditioned horse or pony ‘fit for purpose’ for the class it is competing in can carry between 15-20% of its own body weight (which also includes all tack and rider equipment). However, there are many variables to this as the age, body condition, fitness of the horse / pony and the weight, height, fitness and ability of the rider should also be taken into consideration.

It is advisable in WHP classes that the rider competing in the class undertakes adequate practice jumps. (Body protectors must be worn by anybody undertaking practice jumping). When warming up for jumping classes, competitors must only use the fences provided in the warming up area and practice fences must not exceed the height of the fences jumped in the ring.

It is advisable horse/ponies are warmed up in tack that is permissible in the class the horse/pony is competing in. Rule 55b must be adhered to.

No side reins, draw reins, Market Harborough or any other gadgets can be used when riding a horse/pony in.

A correctly fitted running or standing martingale\* or neck strap may be used when warming up, even when this may not be used in the class the horse or pony is competing in. It is advisable, for both welfare and safety reasons, that the reins be fixed behind the pommel / stirrups on the saddle at any time when the pony is not ridden. However, reins must be in a natural position that does not ‘tie’ the pony in. It is not acceptable for any horse or pony to be in rollkur or forced into an outline where the front of the face is ‘behind the vertical’.

\* *Fitting a running martingale - when the girth part is attached to the girth, the rings should fit just up into the horse’s throat, where the jaw meets the neck. Ideally, when you have a rider sat on the horse, with hands in the normal position, the martingale should not interfere with the reins (ie pull down).*

*The standing martingale should be adjusted so that it is loose enough that the strap can be comfortably pushed up to touch the throat lash of the bridle when the horse has its head in a normal head carriage position.*  
  
Riders cannot use spurs. A schooling whip may be used for warming up, but must not exceed 1m in length. Rule 52 must be adhered to regarding use of whips. Whips must only be carried for safety and guidance purposes and limited to the backhand.  
  
  
6. Lunging.   
  
This can only be undertaken in designated areas, if provided by the show. Lunging can only be undertaken by adults or children who have attained their 17th birthday.  
  
Horses/ponies can only be lunged in a cavesson, snaffle bridle or Dually headcollar. The lunge rein must be securely fitted, either to a cavesson or the lunge line to the bit as an overhead check or coupling attachment. Correctly fitted side reins or, for example, a Chambon fitted, pessoa, hoe or bungee may be used. It is not acceptable for any horse or pony to be in rollkur or forced into an outline where the front of the face is ‘behind the vertical’. Careful consideration should be given with regard to the use of any ‘training-aid’ and should only be used by a competent person. A crupper may be used.  
  
Lunge whips can be used for safety and guidance purposes only. Lunge whips should never be used for reprimanding a horse or pony. They should only be used carefully to support the natural communication between a horse and their handler, or rider, as a directional aid, for example when exercising a horse or supporting a rider’s leg aids when asking a horse to move forwards or sideways.

7. Long reining.   
  
Long reining is a legitimate method of warming up horses and ponies, particularly useful for small ponies to ensure they are prepared for their class. Only snaffle bridles and correctly fitted roller and side reins can be used. Long reining can only be undertaken by a handler who must have attained their 17th birthday. A crupper may be used.   
  
8.Boots and bandages.

Boots and bandages can used when warming up, even when they’re not allowed to be used in the class the pony is competing in.