

Insurance

Insurance is a vital part of responsible horse ownership. Not only can it provide cover for vet's fees in case your horse becomes ill or injured, but it can also cover against third party liability, loss of use, mortality and personal accident.

As with car insurance, there are numerous insurance companies providing cover for you and your horse. There are also different levels of cover, from the companion animal to international eventers and show-jumpers, covering all different types and levels of athletic ability.

Before taking out an insurance policy, it is advisable to contact several reputable firms and obtain quotes. The cheapest quote does not necessarily provide the most cost effective or suitable type of cover.

Read all documentation thoroughly, particularly the small print. If there is anything you do not understand, ask your insurance adviser or broker to explain it.

It is advisable to have a pre-purchase examination (PPE or vetting) undertaken before buying a horse. A five stage PPE is recommended. Be realistic about what activities your horse will be doing; insuring your horse for a discipline it doesn't do will increase the cost of your policy un-necessarily.

Third party and public liability cover is essential for any horse owner as your horse could cause

an accident, resulting in damage to property or injury to people. Cover could protect you from a large financial claim and legal fees if someone claims against you. It is also sensible to ensure your policy has cover for personal accident. Some organisations such as the BHS offer cover for personal accident and third party liability alongside their annual membership.



COMPLICATIONS

- shop around before choosing an insurance policy;
- the cheapest monthly premium is not necessarily the most suitable or cost effective policy;
- ensure vet's fees cover is for an adequate level for your horse and the activities you do with it;
- ensure you have third party and public liability cover for both yourself and your horse;
- consider including personal accident cover and cover for when you are riding other horses.



Insurance policies cover vet's fees for accident, injury and illness. Advances in veterinary science mean that a lot can now be done for a sick or injured horse.

Many policies offer up to £5000 of cover. It is important to get the correct level of cover when you are taking out the policy. You should find out what the limit is on each claim and also if alternative treatments such as physiotherapy, acupuncture or remedial shoeing are covered. There will also be an **excess** for each claim, which can be a variable or fixed amount. Again you should check this amount is suitable for your requirements and budget.

Exclusions

An insurance company may exclude cover for any illness or injury where a previous claim has been made, or if the horse has been ill or injured prior to taking out the insurance policy. It is essential to look carefully through your policy details from the outset and at each annual renewal.

Loss of use

Some insurance policies may also offer a 'loss of use' cover e.g. covering a three day eventer which has suffered an injury that prevents it from eventing. This horse may still be able to hack out but cannot event again. This claim may take a lot of time to process, as it must be proven that the horse is unable to undertake the activity for which it was insured. Two veterinary opinions may be required by the insurance underwriters before a claim like this is accepted. Horses which have been subject to a loss of use claim are freeze branded with an 'L' on the left shoulder.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How much is your excess and is it fixed or variable?
- What is the maximum level of cover per illness or injury? Ensure that this is sufficient cover for complex investigations and/or surgery as this can be several thousands of pounds
- Are alternative treatments covered, along with remedial farriery?
- Does the policy cover for loss of use?
- Are there any exclusions or limits of cover?



Bobby, a 7 year old Cob gelding, suffered from a severe bout of colic. His owner's vet advised that Bobby would require emergency surgery. Bobby had surgery and had to have a section of his bowel removed. Surgery was a success and Bobby was back in work as a dressage horse 6 months later. Bobby's owners had him insured, which included vet's fees up to £5000. A claim form was submitted to the insurer, who paid for Bobby's treatment minus the £100 excess and livery costs whilst hospitalised.



XLEquine is a novel and exciting initiative conceived from within the veterinary profession made up of independently owned, progressive veterinary practices located throughout the United Kingdom, members of XLEquine are committed to working together for the benefit of all their clients.
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