

A guide to horse Insurance

Seeking out the best horse insurance for you and your horse can be an overwhelming task! Insurance is a vital part of responsible horse ownership and not only can it provide cover for vet's fees in case your horse becomes ill or injured but there are many other things it can cover too. Some lesser known options include human dental cover, hire of a replacement horse due to theft or straying and holiday cancellation fees if your horse needs life-saving surgery.

There are many policies out there which may be suitable for your needs including foal, leisure use, small ponies, veteran, catastrophe cover, competition or sports horse policies.

So what can be covered on Insurance?

The basic level of insurance for your horse or pony often includes:

Death or slaughter ? if the horse dies due to an accident, illness or disease. **Theft or Straying** - if the horse is not found within 28 days

Optional extras may then include the following, to build up the level of cover according to your requirements:

Vet's Fees- often a maximum amount can be claimed per incident (< £3000-£5000), some companies may increase this for specific procedures such as colic surgery (<£7500). Some policies may also cover a certain amount towards complementary treatment such as hydrotherapy, physiotherapy, remedial shoeing etc. **Public liability** ? legal liability to a third party for the damages and costs arising from your use of the insured horse **Permanent loss of use**- if the horse has an accident, illness or disease that permanently prevents it from carrying out the functions it is kept an insured for (e.g. an eventer that sustains an injury that means it can no longer event but is suitable for hacking). These horses are often freeze branded with an 'L' to denote loss of use. The amount you are entitled to may change with some policies as the horse gets older. **Personal accident** ? death, total and permanent loss of sight or hearing, limb loss or disablement. **Dental cover** ? emergency dental treatment. This may be reduced if riders are under 16 years of age **Stable cover** ? if the stable owned by you is destroyed or damaged beyond use by fire **Saddlery and tack** ? Fire, accidental damage or theft following forcible or violent entry to a locked private building **Hire of replacement horse** ? this covers a certain amount towards hire of a replacement horse between the date of theft or straying until a claim is made or the horse recovered. **Livery fees**- a contribution if you have to go to hospital **Holiday cancellation fees** ? often up to a certain amount if your horse needs life-saving surgery **Legal costs and advice** ? providing you with advice and help with the cost of legal representation

So what should you do to ensure your horse remains covered by your chosen policy? Here are a few common insurance mishaps and how to avoid them.

Non-disclosure and remember to update - It is

essential to declare any illnesses or injuries to your insurance company on renewal, otherwise this may prevent your claims from being paid in the future. If the use of your horse has changed and therefore its value, then perhaps switching to a different kind of policy with your insurer may be more suitable.

Make sure you do your research - always

read the small print, this will help you get the most suitable insurance cover for you and your horse. Things to look for include the excess cost, standard of service you can expect to receive, whether staff are knowledgeable with horses and how long the company has been established.

Buying first, insuring later - it

is always recommended to check that the horse is insurable before committing to a vetting or purchasing the horse. Ask your intended insurer what documentation is required for the intended policy (i.e a vetting certificate or radiographs). These may then be sent to the insurance company for them to validate in some circumstances.

If

the purchase goes ahead it is important to insure the horse at purchase, otherwise the vetting certificate may be out of date if this is done weeks or months later.

If you are not vetting your horse, it is still worth purchasing cover as soon as money changes hands. There is often a limitation period of 14 days until your horse is fully covered.

Policy

conditions - make sure you are aware of any conditions the insurance company expects you to abide by with your policy. This may include following a worming programme, arranging an annual dental examination, or keeping up to date with routine vaccinations. Keeping a worming record, always recording your horse's vaccines in their passport and keeping receipts can make this process much easier should you need to make a claim.

Insurance is great, but don't double up - Insuring

yourself twice for the same activity can cause almost as many problems as not insuring at all and be costly in the long run. This may be the case with public liability and tack insurance. For example, if you are already a member of an organisation such as British Dressage then you will be covered for public liability. Similarly, if you keep your tack at home then this is likely covered by your home insurance. Being insured twice may delay a claim being paid if two different insurance companies need to agree on who is paying.

Not insuring

for the right activity - It is vital that you let your insurers know if you start a new discipline with your horse or start to compete at a higher level

than initially stated. This may increase your risk of an injury and could be an issue if your policy does not reflect this.

Overvaluing

your horse: Most horse insurers offer market value policies. This means that in the event of loss of use or death, regardless of how much you insured for, you would receive the market price for your horse. It is important to be realistic and keep the policy updated with the horse's current worth otherwise you could end up paying a higher premium for a horse that's value may have decreased.

Despite these common pitfalls, quality insurance is so important to have in place should the worst happen and your horse requires unexpected veterinary treatment. Without it you may not be able to provide the level of care needed to treat your horse and look after him during recovery.

In Summary, a few things to remember?.

- 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 them- 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