



AESE Projects Overview

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**Advancing Equine Scientific Excellence is a committee of the
British Equestrian Federation's Equine Development Portfolio**

Introduction

This document provides a short overview of past and current Advancing Equine Scientific Excellence projects. The projects can be split into two types:

- **Case studies** – based on a series of questions that are answered by students at the participating institutions; and
- **Collaborative projects** – based on an AESE designed methodology, utilising a number of research strategies that are relevant to the study.

The table below provides an overview of the focus, timeline and type of each of these studies:

Project	Focus	Launched	Completed	Case study	Collaborative project
CEIS	New central equine information system	Jan '13	April '13	✓	
IPiE	Increasing participation in equestrianism	Oct '13	Nov '15		✓
EEoL	Attitudes to equine end of life and euthanasia	Sept '14	Ongoing		✓
RS26	What could a riding school look like in 10 years' time?	Nov '15	Anticipated May '16	✓	

Further details of each of these projects, listed in the order found in the table, can be found below.

AESE would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the many people who participated in each of these studies: whether through gathering data, providing a response or in some other way. Without their hard work none of these projects would have taken place.

If you would like further information please contact Jan Rogers, Head of Equine Development at the British Equestrian Federation (jan.rogers@bef.co.uk).

Central Equine Information System Case Study

Launched January 2013, completed April 2013

The contract between the National Equine Database (NED) and Defra to supply database management services ended in September 2012. Following an e-tendering process for a replacement contract, a cost/benefit analysis of bids meant that no new contract was awarded and it was confirmed that no further funding from Defra was available. However, Local Authority enforcement bodies supported the possibility of a new central equine information system in order to be able to enforce passport legislation more easily and some Passport Issuing Organisations (PIOs) said that they were missing NED, which was central to their ability to carry out their duties as passport issuers. The Equine Disease Coalition was also supportive of a central information system which was able to record equine owner location on a more robust basis so as to enable effective communication and information exchange to help inform owners of how to protect their horses in the event of disease incursion.

Advancing Equine Scientific Excellence (AESE) facilitated this collaborative case study to understand, in addition to the features indicated above, what any new central equine information system might be able to offer horse people¹. The students of today are users of the future, and along with horse people could have valuable input into a new central system, what it may offer, and how it might be run. This study provided the opportunity for establishments to take part in a national scale collaborative study, and for lecturers and their students to influence any potential future central equine information system. The study included the opportunity for a group of students from each institution involved to present their findings to AESE at Stoneleigh Park. Three institutions were selected to present their results and recommendations to representatives from the British Horse Industry Confederation (BHIC), Defra and the Equine Health and Welfare Strategy Group (EHWS). The industry groups used the information collected to help to determine whether there was sufficient demand amongst the equine community for a new central equine information system to exist and fund itself.

¹ The new central equine information system will need to be relevant to all those who own or keep horses, including carers and riders. Therefore, this case study refers to a “horse person” or “horse people”. This term encompasses horse owners, keepers, carers and riders.

Increasing Participation in Equestrianism (IPiE) collaborative project

Launched October 2013, completed November 2015

The British Equestrian Federation (BEF) has been working with Sport England to encourage people to start or return to riding and to continue to ride regularly, as part of its legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Between the inception of Advancing Equine Scientific Excellence's (AESE) Increasing Participation in Equestrianism (IPiE) project in April 2013, and 2017, the BEF aims to get at least 25,000 more people riding.

The IPiE collaborative project focused on identifying factors that contributed to reduced or lapsed horse riding; understanding potential remedies that might encourage more frequent riding; and exploring the possible evolution of potential or current products including: Hoof; the Hoof Young People's Product; and Take Back the Reins. The results have fed into the work the BEF is undertaking with equestrian centres and riding schools to overcome barriers to participation, and provided market intelligence to develop targeted products that encourage people to take up riding and continue riding as a regular sport.

Delivered by AESE, and sponsored by the BEF funded by Sport England, as well as Alltech, data for the project was gathered by 26 students from 13 institutions recruited in the late summer of 2013. Data were derived through a standardised, AESE-designed depth interview (DI) script, and focus groups (FG), using a purposive homogenous sampling strategy which targeted specific groups of current riders, lapsed riders, or potential new riders where new riders had not ridden before. An online survey (OS) was also utilised, based on the DI script, again to gather information from specific target groups. The OS was publicised through social media and email, with a paper version available. Participants for the OS were self-selecting and subsequently categorised into the appropriate target group during data analysis.

Equine End of Life (EEoL) collaborative project

Launched September 2014, data collection completed December 2015, data analysis ongoing

Since 2011 the UK's Equine Sector Council for Health and Welfare has undertaken an annual review of the 2007 Equine Health and Welfare Strategy. Risks identified have been assessed under one of four categories: general risks; welfare risks; health risks; and knowledge/skills risks. Within the welfare risks category, a "delay in euthanasia" giving rise to welfare concerns, was rated as the second highest risk after the over breeding of low value equines.

The EEoL (Equine End of Life) project, coordinated by Advancing Equine Scientific Excellence (AESE), and supported by The Donkey Sanctuary (TDS) and World Horse Welfare (WHW) aims to provide an in-depth awareness of attitudes to equine euthanasia and end of life decisions. The purpose of the research is to develop the knowledge-base in relation to why people do or do not feel able to make the decision to put an equine to sleep; the thought process worked through to arrive at these decisions; and what additional information and support could be made available to help people to put the equine to sleep when the time is right and/or such a decision is needed.

Data for the project has been gathered by 28 students from 13 institutions recruited in the late summer of 2014. Data were derived through an AESE-designed methodology, which included a depth interview (DI) script, along with focus groups (FG), using a purposive homogenous sampling strategy which targeted specific groups of donkey owners and carers, recreation/amateur horse or pony owners; or competition/professional horse or pony owners. An online survey (OS) was also utilised, based on the DI script, again to gather information from specific target groups. The OS was publicised through social media and email, with a paper version available. Participants for the OS were self-selecting and subsequently categorised into the appropriate target group during data analysis. Preliminary data analysis was undertaken to give a flavor of the findings to sponsors; following this sponsors have prioritised questions for the next stage of analysis and this is currently underway.

Two parallel projects have run alongside the main EEoL study. The first considered the volunteer sector, specifically the British Horse Society's (BHS) Friends at the End initiative and the role those involved play in assisting equine owners and carers who need to make the decision to have an animal euthanised. The second is examining the role of vets in working with equine owners when considering end of life choices. The projects have been undertaken by two Masters students; at the time of writing in April 2016 the first is complete and the second is due to conclude in September 2016.

What could a riding school look like in 10 years' time? (RS26) case study

Launched November 2015, anticipated completion May 2016

Advancing Equine Scientific Excellence (AESE) facilitated this collaborative case study in order to understand 'What could a riding school look like in 10 years' time?'. The British Horse Society (BHS) was the principal sponsor, with support from Alltech.

The students of today are users at both the present time and the future, and, along with those who have an interest in learning to ride and continue in equestrianism, were given the opportunity to input into how riding centres develop. This was an opportunity for educational institutions to take part in a national scale collaborative study, and to influence the development of riding establishments, as well as the strategy of the BHS. The study involved the opportunity for a group of students from each participating institution to come to Abbey Park and present their findings to a panel of judges. Five groups of students from were selected to present their results and recommendations a second time to representatives from the equine sector, including the BHS.

In 1947, following the amalgamation of The Institute of the Horse and Pony Club and the National Horse Association of Great Britain, the British Horse Society (BHS) was formed. At the same time, the horse's role was evolving. The beginning of the 20th century saw the equine viewed as a beast of burden with key roles in agriculture, defence and transport; by the end of the Second World War this had shifted and it was viewed more as a recreational and sporting animal.

Since its formation after World War II, the BHS has represented the interests of those who ride or drive horse-drawn vehicles in the UK. In 2015 the charity had 90,000 members, with a further 33,000 members of British Riding Clubs. Its vision is to provide a strong voice for horses and people which spreads awareness through support, training and education, alongside a mission to work, in a spirit of partnership with energy commitment and knowledge, to promote and achieve the highest standards in all areas of equestrianism, and riding schools are at the core of its focus. This project will allow students to explore a variety of innovative opportunities for the expansion of riding school activities over the next 10 years with a view to improving business openings for the centres and increasing participation in equestrianism.

About AESE

Advancing Equine Scientific Excellence (AESE) is now an established initiative operating as a committee of the British Equestrian Federation's (BEF) Equine Development Portfolio. In its first stages, AESE was formed as a collaboration between the BEF and British Society of Animal Science (BSAS), and generously funded by Alltech.

The purpose of AESE is to:

- To provide research support and guidance to the BEF and its member bodies in line with the strategic objectives set out in its Strategic Plan;
- To advance scientific excellence through improved collaboration between the equine industry, research institutes, colleges and universities throughout the British Isles;
- To provide support to those carrying out equine research;
- To provide continuing professional development to those carrying out equine research;
- To coordinate collaborative research projects across all disciplines which benefit the equine industry;
- To assist in the dissemination of the findings and information from research throughout the industry;
- To offer a link between organisations who want research carried out and those who wish to undertake research into any area or aspect of the equine industry;
- To help the development of a UK-wide equine research community.

AESE provides training for lecturers, researchers and students on both equine and equine-related courses. It also carries out research projects which the horse industry needs. Details of AESE's previous roadshows, providing CPD and support to lecturers and post-graduate students, can be found in the Archive section of AESE's webpage [here](#). AESE's main webpage can be found [here](#).

Committee (as of 1st Jan 2016)

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