

**Grazing  
Animals  
Project**



## **GAP Information Leaflet 9**

### ***The Welfare Considerations of Tethering for Conservation Grazing***

### **Tethering Animals**

**Tethering is sometimes considered in a number of situations for conservation grazing, generally where fencing is not possible. This might include common land or sites where fencing would be inappropriate or unduly intrusive, such as along cliff tops. However, on welfare grounds *GAP does not normally recommend the tethering of animals for conservation management*, although carried out carefully in suitable locations it may be done without cause for concern.**

Tethering is defined here as securing an animal by an appropriately attached chain or rope to a secure point or anchorage causing it to be confined to a desired area. Here we consider tethering outside for nature conservation purposes, not housed tethering. Animals may be tethered to a central peg, or to a line running between two pegs (known as a running tether). There are a number of key requirements for tethering.

Tethered animals need to be checked very regularly, at least twice a day, to ensure there is adequate food, water, firm ground and shelter (even if removed at night) that the animal has not become entangled with the chain, or wrapped it around scrub, can move about freely and lie down, and that it is not being persecuted by dogs and/or people. Close attention needs to be paid to secure and comfortable collars, chains, swivel links (see picture) and stakes fitted with rotating collars at ground level (check for wear and tear and changes in the security of the peg following changes in the ground condition e.g. due to weather). A water supply that cannot be knocked over is also needed (e.g. a bucket in a tyre). Clearly "freedom to exhibit normal behaviour" will have been curtailed, and this problem is exacerbated by tethering single animals. However tethering more than one animal requires careful thought as to their proximity to one another and the extent of possible interactions between them, e.g. females in season should not be tethered near males.



Tethering is of course not at all suitable to sites with much public usage (dogs, fire, vandalism, titbit feeding etc.). Sites where there is a constant or very regular staff presence but little public access would most suitable. If tethering is used on a conservation site, it would be advisable to consult with the local RSPCA officer beforehand, to ensure they are happy with the arrangements, and are aware of the situation in case of complaints from the public. Tethering is not frequently practiced (although still occurs in places such as Guernsey, and until relatively recently on the Isles of Scilly), and the public can be disconcerted to see tethered animals.

### **Animal welfare legislation**

The draft Animals Welfare Bill (2005) states that tethering is "an acceptable practice provided that appropriate husbandry practices are in place and that proper care is taken for the welfare of the animals. The animals must be tethered in an appropriate way, as detailed in the Code; they must have adequate feed, water and shelter and be within sight and sound of other animals."

The draft Animals Welfare Bill recommends that a code of practice for tethering should be written. Guernsey already has a code of practice – please contact the GAP office for a copy.

Tethering is currently subject to the **Protection Against Cruel Tethering Act (1988)**

[http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1988/Ukpga\\_19880031\\_en\\_1.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1988/Ukpga_19880031_en_1.htm)

although this does not provide the guidance on good practice that will be available from a code. Under the act it is an offence to tether any horse, pony, ass or mule under such conditions or in such a manner as to cause that animal unnecessary suffering. The Act applies only to England and Wales.

The **Abandonment of Animals Act (1960)**

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/domestic/#1960>

makes it an offence to abandon a domestic or captive animal in circumstances likely to cause unnecessary suffering. Where there are concerns about the infrequency with which animals are checked, prosecution could ensue under this act.

The RSPCA produces a leaflet **Tied animals – how to avoid tragedy** [www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk), tel. 0870 010 1181.

## Tethering Livestock

### Goats

Excerpt from the Defra code of recommendations for goats

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/farmed/othersps/goats/pb0081/goatcode.htm>

18. Outdoor tethering, if carried out, requires a high degree of supervision with inspections at frequent intervals. Tethered goats are particularly vulnerable to worrying by dogs and teasing by children. Goats should not be tethered where there are obstacles and a risk of the chain becoming entangled. Tethers should be designed and maintained so as not to cause distress or injury to the goats. Collars should be light but substantial and attached to a strong chain not less than 3 metres in length with at least two swivels. Particular care should be taken to provide food, water and shelter.

19. Kids should never be tethered

Further information on tethering goats: *Goat Husbandry* by David Mackenzie, ed. Ruth Campbell, Faber & Faber 1993.



A tethered goat being used on Alners Gorse. Photo J. Davis

## Equines

The Equine Industry Welfare Guidelines Compendium for Horses, Ponies and donkeys contains the following guidelines on tethering:

<http://www.adas.co.uk/equinewelfare/compendium.pdf>

“Tethering in an open environment at grass or whilst grazing is not a suitable method of long-term management, as it restricts the animal’s freedom to exercise itself, to find food and water, or to escape from either predators or the extremes of hot and cold weather. It also risks an animal becoming entangled, or injuring itself, on tethering equipment. As a short-term method of animal management horses can be tethered at grass or whilst grazing under strict guidelines and regular supervision.”

**It is seen as a suitable method of management only in the short-term**

The RSPCA **Tethering - good practice guide** is available from RSPCA, Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Horsham, West Sussex, RH13 9RS tel; 0870 010 1181. The RSPCA have a code of practice not currently available on their website but viewable on [www.southwark.gov.uk/Uploads/FILE\\_6717.pdf](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/Uploads/FILE_6717.pdf) : Minimum requirements for the welfare of tethered equines are:

- Very young, old, sick, pregnant or nursing equines should not be tethered (e.g. not under 1 year, not in last 3<sup>rd</sup> of pregnancy, not with foals at foot).
- Equines should only be tethered on suitable sites, e.g. level, good grass cover, free of hazards, with natural or artificial shelter, not crossed by public rights of way etc. The written permission of the landowner should be obtained before tethering any equine. It should be regularly cleared of droppings
- Suitable tethering equipment should be used - e.g. good quality, strong but lightweight chain with a 360 degree swivel on each end; well-fitting head collar or wide leather strap. All equipment should be regularly checked for wear and to ensure it is not causing the equine any discomfort.
- In particularly hot, wet or freezing weather the condition of the ground may enable the equine to easily break free of the tethering stake. The stake should therefore be regularly checked to ensure the equine cannot break free and stray.
- Suitable arrangements must be made for adequate food and water and access to shelter.
- In extremes of weather, arrangements should be made to move the equine to suitable shelter.
- Tethered animals should be regularly checked at regular intervals of a specified period of hours, e.g. six hours (not more than 12 hours).
- Equines should be allowed a daily period of exercise off the tether.
- All equines should be suitably identified.
- Regular veterinary checks, including foot care and worming, should be arranged.



See also:

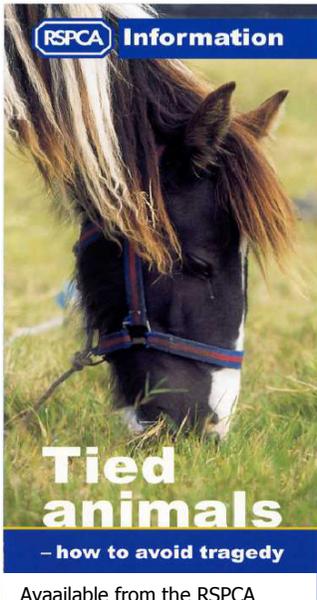
- Draft Health and welfare strategy for horses, ponies and donkeys  
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/ahws/ehws/pdfs/draftstrategy.pdf>
- Guide to Tethering Horse and Ponies (BHS/Home Of Rest For Horses 2000) not currently uploaded to website, contact British Horse Society, Stoneleigh Deer Park, Kenilworth, Warwickshire, CV8 2XZ. tel. 08701 299992

**Cattle**

Tethering of cattle is rarely seen now, although it was carried out until fairly recently on the Isles of Scilly, and still takes place on Guernsey. It has sometimes been considered for conservation grazing on cliff top situations. The Code of recommendations for cattle (also pigs) relates to housed tethering. RSPCA and organic welfare standards do not permit cattle tethering, although this is again in the context of housed tethering). The Guernsey code of recommendations for cattle "long-tethering" (not housed) state that it is "an acceptable practice provided that appropriate husbandry practices are in place and that proper care is taken for the welfare of the animals. The animals must be tethered in an appropriate way, as detailed in the Code; they must have adequate feed, water and shelter and be within sight and sound of other animals." (Contact the GAP Office for full document)

**Sheep**

The Defra code of recommendations for sheep  
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/farmed/sheep/booklets/sheep.pdf>  
 states that " Devices such .... tethers and yokes should be of suitable material and should be properly fitted and adjusted to avoid causing injury or discomfort. They should be checked regularly and should not be used for longer than necessary. Tethering by the horns is unacceptable".



**Disclaimer:** all articles were correct at time of going to press

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**Feedback ... Please**

GAP would welcome the opportunity to refine this Information Leaflet. If you have comments that you want us to consider or details you wish to have included in the next version, please return this tear off slip or send us an e-mail to: [enquiries@grazinganimalsproject.info](mailto:enquiries@grazinganimalsproject.info)

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