

'Lose the Blinkers' road safety campaign launched



A road safety campaign to reduce injuries and deaths as a result of vehicles passing too close to horses is to be launched this week by Police Scotland, with support from the British Horse Society and Glasgow City Council.

The 'Lose the Blinkers' campaign is aimed at all road users, with particular emphasis on the urban fringes of large towns and cities, where many horse riders stable their horses, and exercise them in the evenings and at weekends.

According to the British Horse Society, since 2010 there have been 50 riders injured, two deaths, 43 horses injured and 10 horses killed on Scotland's roads. Many of these have been due to vehicles either colliding or passing too close to the horse, causing them to throw the rider or to panic and bolt.

Alan Hiscox, Director of Safety for the British Horse Society, said: "We want to remind drivers that horses can be unpredictable, and even the most well-trained horse can react to its instincts and want to move quickly away from what they consider to be a threat. It is worth remembering that there are three brains working when a horse and rider meet a vehicle on the road, the driver's, the rider's and the horses'. There is room for everyone on the road if we all show some consideration."

Inspector Janet Dickie from Police Scotland's Road Policing Division, said: "We recognise the vulnerability that horse riders experience on our roads and this campaign is aimed at both riders and those who may come across them, as we all share the same road and need to show mutual respect.

“All road users deserve to travel safely – some people are put off from riding as they fear being involved in a collision, and many riders are deterred from riding on the roadway for fear of them or their horses being seriously injured or killed.

“I am urging all drivers to give horses as much room as possible when you pass, as failure to give sufficient space is considered careless or even dangerous driving and drivers face prosecution for failing to do so. Likewise, I am urging all horse riders to make sure they are as visible as possible, particularly as the days shorten, by wearing high visibility clothing, using lights and giving clear signals.

“Operation ‘Lose the Blinkers’ will see plain clothed officers from the Mounted Branch patrolling areas of concern and recording incidents of bad driving on camera. In the first instance, drivers will be stopped by Road Policing Officers and educated in the hazards of passing horses incorrectly, however we will move to an enforcement phase in early November, and so I would urge all road users to take care and drive or ride appropriately at all times.”

Glasgow City Council has funded the production of a poster and leaflets highlighting the issue, which will be distributed to the riding community and online.