

Checking the Ponies

1. The ponies themselves.

The checks you will need to carry out are very simple and straightforward. They basically involve **counting** to make sure all the ponies are present and checking that they appear to be in good health.

In practice this means are all the ponies **walking** ok. Getting them to stand up if they are all asleep, however, could be a challenge!

A **limp** where a pony can put some weight on the affected limb is not usually a problem. If however the leg is not being used at all, this is a sign that help is required.

Otherwise as long as there are no obvious signs of injury all should be ok. Any pony (like all animals) that is **on its own** away from the rest of the group for an extended period, should, however, be closely monitored. These guys can be usually be identified by numbers on their left haunches

They have all been wormed prior to coming on site, and as they cannot cross contaminate with worms from sheep etc. this should not be a problem.

2. The site infrastructure.

There are some things to keep a look-out for when you are out on the Law. In particular, check that the ponies have a ready access to **water**. If the **trough** freezes over, you will need to break the surface (I shall try and put a tool under the trough to help you do this). Otherwise the trough should refill as the ponies drink out of it, if it does not, let me know.

If you can also check that the **fencing / drystone dykes** all look ok – no vandalism, nor nudging by curious ponies – that is part of the job, too. The last thing anyone wants is to have to round up escaped ponies! As for gates, most will either be left locked or left tied open to make it clear whether there is a need to close them or not.

3. Ragwort. Most of you and can identify ragwort and know we have been undertaking to clear it from the hill. If you do not know how to recognise it, this <http://www.ragtaguk.com/ragwortimages.html> website has good images, though I disagree with their claim that rag fork removal is not an effective way of keeping the plant's spread in check. Be that as it may, we are keen to ensure the amount of the plant on Traprain is kept to a minimum as it is toxic to ponies if ingested. Fortunately the ponies are not thick and the real risk is only in winter when they could inadvertently consume dried shoots mixed in with the dried up grasses. So we (or should I say you!) are by your removal efforts doing an invaluable job. If, however, you notice a large clump of the plant and think it may have been missed – or just needs removing, you can let me know and I'll double-check to see whether it is programmed in for clearance.

4. Site information.

Laura will regularly check and update the notice board in the car park, so you should not have to worry about checking that. However, posters get battered by the weather quickly or ripped off by ne'er do wells, so if you come across any needing replaced it is something else to report.

5. The Public...

You are not expected to get involved with members of the public in the course of the checking – though please feel free to let them know if they are interested, it is after all a great story. If, however, you see people either feeding the ponies or not controlling their

dogs appropriately then log this and let me know (if you can describe the dog that would be useful). It is entirely up to you whether you speak to people in these circumstances, (it is really the ranger's job), but so long as you are polite and not accusatory, you should be ok.

Your Safety on the Law

...Is the MOST important consideration. Please only do your duty if the weather is compliant – rain and wind is ok, but thunderstorms, ice, blizzards and gales are a NO.

It may sound obvious, but DO NOT go close to the edge of the quarry / cliff under any circumstance, there's a lot of the loose material and the edge is sheer. Likewise, the South faces are very steep and you should not go too close to the edge in your quest to count. If you cannot see from above, I'm afraid you'll just have to walk around to the base.

The eastern slope has a faint track running up / down its length. DO NOT be deceived, this also a perilous route and not one to be taken

Otherwise when out on the hill, ensure you are adequately dressed, equipped with a mobile phone, and have agreed a call-out plan either with me or your nearest and dearest – again I can cover this during the induction.

Tick list of things to check

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| 1 | Ponies all there? | |
| 2 | Ponies all ok? | |
| 3 | Trough - working ok? Is water frozen? | |
| 4 | Summit pond ok? | |
| 5 | Site fencing, walls and boundaries all ok? | |
| 6 | Posters – are they visible? | |
| 7 | Public – any people trying to feed the ponies? | |
| 8 | Dogs – any dogs not being controlled properly? Description? | |
| 9 | Ragwort – is it looking like a problem? | |
| 10 | Other | |

Many thanks for your help with the grazing project and enjoy yourself out on the hill!

Duncan Priddle, Countryside Officer