



FREE-PHONE ADVISORY SERVICE FOR HELICOPTER TRAFFIC INFORMATION **0800 51 55 44**

(Nov - Mar: Mon–Fri 0800 to 1700)

(Apr - Oct: Mon–Fri 0800 to 2000)

MILITARY HELICOPTER LOW FLYING FACTS AND FIGURES

- 68% of all helicopter tactical low flying training is conducted in helicopter Dedicated User Areas surrounding helicopter main operating bases, that cover just 6% of UK Land Mass available for Low Flying (an area approximately similar to the size of East Anglia).
- Much of the remaining tactical helicopter low flying is conducted in Helicopter Training Areas close to main operating bases, and information on this activity is available from the free-phone service.
- Some helicopters operate further away from their bases or training areas and in addition, areas of the UK not routinely used for helicopter training are sometimes used for exercises. When helicopters conduct tactical training outside their normal training areas, this information will also be available to members of the public, and details of major exercises will be available on-line, and in local press and media.

www.mod.uk/issues/lowflying

BRITISH HORSE SOCIETY FACTS AND FIGURES

- There are 2.4 million riders in the UK and around 965,000 horses.
- The British Horse Society (BHS) is the UK's largest and most influential equestrian charity, and campaigns tirelessly in the areas of equine welfare, horse and rider safety, access & off-road riding, training & education, and riding school and livery yard approval.
- The BHS has 62,000 members, and 720 Approved Riding Establishments in the UK.

www.bhs.org.uk



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE



MILITARY HELICOPTER LOW FLYING

SAFETY



A GUIDE FOR RIDERS

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has recently completed an in-depth review of military helicopter low flying and its potential impact on horse riders. Rider safety is of paramount importance, and this leaflet explains the key issues, and in conjunction with the British Horse Society offers safety advice for horse riders.

HELICOPTER LOW FLYING

All helicopters share common mission profiles: they depart from their operating base, navigate to an objective area, deliver the required effect (whether this is direct fire, surveillance or support to ground forces), and then return to their operating base. Recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have shown how vulnerable helicopters can be to a variety of weapons, and helicopter crews' primary means of survival is to fly as low as possible, to minimize exposure to these threats. by achieving surprise, and thereby reducing risk.

Tactical helicopter low flying is therefore vital to protect both crews and the troops they support during operations, and is used for concealed approaches and departures, operating in confined areas, pick-up and delivery of troops and under-slung loads, and for both direct fire and observation. The low flying skills necessary to conduct these missions have to be constantly practiced during peacetime so that helicopter crews are ready for operational duties anywhere in the world, often at very short notice. Helicopter crews training for these activities in the UK may be authorised to fly down to ground level when necessary.

Helicopter crews are highly trained to avoid horse riders if at all possible, and special drills on the helicopter are used to minimize disturbance if riders can be seen in sufficient time.



VISIBILITY TRIALS

In the spring of 2005, MOD conducted trials to see what could be done to increase the conspicuity of horse riders. Personal strobe lights, emergency radio beacons, infra-red devices were all examined, but none offered a robust and cost-effective solution. Trial BRIGHT EYES was devised to test the effectiveness of high visibility clothing, and initial results were very encouraging, leading to flight trials using volunteer riders, arranged with the assistance of the BHS. The live flight trial investigated the range at which helicopter crews detected riders dressed in 'normal' riding wear, and then looked at the effect on detection range when high visibility clothing, comprising jacket, helmet cover and exercise sheet were used. The Trial showed very clearly that, providing the riders were in line of sight of the helicopter, high visibility clothing significantly improved detection ranges, allowing the crew to see the riders in time to avoid over-flight. Whilst high visibility clothing may not always prevent helicopters from over-flying riders, it does provide a considerable and cost-effective improvement in rider safety.



FREE-PHONE ADVISORY SERVICE

As a result of the MOD review of helicopter low flying, a number of improvements have been made to the MOD Free-phone Advisory Service, first launched in March 2005. This improved service, with more detailed information on helicopter low flying will be available to horse riders and members of the public from 3rd October 2005, by calling

0800 51 55 44



BHS SAFETY ADVICE FOR RIDERS

Horses have a highly developed sense of hearing and extremely mobile ears that allow sound from all directions to be detected. Horses can also hear sounds that are inaudible to humans, and can detect faint noises up to 4 km away. The horse's ears prick up and turn towards the sound, and this 'Pryer Reflex' can show where the horse's attention is focussed. If a sound is unusual, eye movement and head movement may follow to try and identify the sound, providing a good warning signal for the rider.

Why Do Horses Spook?

Originally, horses were grazing herd animals, and their hearing was a primary defence against predators. Even today, the horse's basic instinct has not changed, and in response to real or imagined danger, the horse will run away, particularly when faced by something unfamiliar. The horse is also very sensitive to any insecurity or lack of confidence in the rider, and will respond accordingly.



What Can I Do As A Rider?

The horse is likely to hear a helicopter before the rider, and the 'Pryer Reflex' may indicate the horse senses danger, and where the danger is coming from. Horses can distinguish specific words and become familiar with a rider's voice, so it is very important to talk to horses to calm them. Running a hand along the horse's neck can also have a calming influence. If the horse is frightened, it is vital that the rider remains calm, keeping their legs in contact with the saddle but not clamping them on the horse's sides, as this may be interpreted as rider fright, and will also urge the horse to go forward. Sit deep in the saddle, relax and try to keep the horse listening to you until the helicopter has passed.