

FARRIERS REGISTRATION COUNCIL
DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE FARRIERS REGISTRATION COUNCIL, 14 SWAN COURT, FORDER WAY,
CYGNET PARK, HAMPTON, PETERBOROUGH PE7 8GX

INQUIRY RE:

MR BEN PRICE DIPWCF

1. THE CHARGE

1.1 *"That, being registered under the Farriers (Registration) Act 1975 (as amended) ("the Act"), you:*

1. *In August 2024, at an appointment to shoe a horse named Boo belonging to CR at Ladwood Farm in Kent:*

- (a) hit Boo with a metal rasp;*
- (b) used offensive and/or abusive and /or unprofessional words, more particularly "f*****g stand up!";*

2. *On 2 October at Ladwood Farm in Kent:*

(a) In the course of shoeing a horse named Star, belonging to SJ used offensive and/or abusive and/or unprofessional words, more particularly words to the following effect:

- i. "f*****g stand up!";*
- ii. "do you wanna f*****g do it?";*
- iii. "what the f**k did you feed her for?";*

(b) In the course of shoeing the horse named Boo, belonging to CR:

- i. threw a hammer across the barn;*
- ii. used offensive and/or abusive and/or unprofessional words, more particularly the following or words to a similar effect*
 - A. "f*****g horses;"*
 - B. "f*****g don't know why I do this job;"*
 - C. "I f*****g hate them;"*
 - D. "It doesn't f*****g matter if I'm okay cos all that matters is that your f*****g horse gets shod;"*
 - E. "Your f*****g horses are all a bunch of c****s;"*

3. *Failed to submit any or all of the Annual Returns to the Council for the following years:*

- (a) 2016
- (b) 2017
- (c) 2018
- (d) 2019
- (e) 2020
- (f) 2021, and
- (g) 2022.

4. *Failed to submit the Annual Return for 2024 until May 2025*

And that in relation to the facts alleged above, whether individually or in any combination, you are guilty of serious misconduct in a professional respect.

Representation

1.2 The Council was represented by Mr Michael Collis, instructed by Capsticks. The Respondent was represented by Mr Matthew Corrie, instructed by Morrish Solicitors.

Response to Charges

1.3 The Respondent admitted Charges 2 (b) (i) and (ii) A, B and E. In making these admissions on behalf of the Respondent Mr Corrie made it clear that there were some remaining factual issues to be resolved in relation to the circumstances and way in which the hammer was thrown and, so far as the words alleged were concerned, the precise words used and the way in which those words were uttered.

1.4 Mr Corrie said that in relation to Charge 2 (a), which was denied, the Respondent accepted using the phrase "for f**k's sake" but not the phrases set out in the sub-charges, and in relation to 2 (b) ii D, which was also denied, the Respondent accepted the use of the phrase but without the word "f*****g" included.

1.5 The Respondent also admitted Charges 3 and 4.

1.6 The remaining Charges were denied.

Background

1.7 The Council received a complaint, dated 11 October 2024 which concerned the Respondent's conduct when shoeing horses at Ladwood Farm, Kent. The Respondent had visited those premises on 2 October 2024 to shoe three horses. While shoeing the second and third of those horses, *Star* and *Boo*, it was alleged that the Respondent became angry, swore repeatedly at and about the horses and threw a hammer across a barn. He behaved in this way in the presence of the owners of the horses.

1.8 Following this complaint, it was also brought to the Council's attention that, at an appointment at the same premises in August 2024, it was alleged that the Respondent had hit *Boo* with a rasp and also sworn at her, using the words "f*****g stand up!".

- 1.9 During the course of the Council's investigation it emerged that the Respondent had failed to submit Annual Returns between 2016 and 2022 and also failed to submit an Annual Return for 2024 until May 2025.

The Evidence

- 1.10 The Committee heard oral evidence, given by video link, from Ms SJ and Ms CR, the owners of the horses which were being shod.
- 1.11 Ms SJ told the Committee that it was apparent to her when she met the Respondent in the morning on 2 October 2024 that he was in a bad mood. He seemed abrupt in his manner and aggressive in the way in which he was nailing on shoes to *Star*, holding the hammer behind his head, and banging it down upon the nail and grabbing the horse's legs and shouting at her. She said that he shouted, "*f*****g stand up!*" about twice and, when she asked if hot shoeing was painful for the horse said, "*do you wanna f*****g do it?*". As *Star* was becoming agitated, Ms SJ started to feed her some nuts from a bowl and when *Star* moved again during the shoeing the Respondent said, "*what the f**k did you feed her for?*"
- 1.12 After *Star* had been shod, the Respondent moved on to shoe *Boo*. As it had started to rain more heavily by this time, they moved into a barn. *Boo* had a hind leg raised as a shoe was being nailed on and lost her balance. As she put her foot down, she trod on the Respondent's foot. At this point, according to Ms SJ, the Respondent threw his hammer across the barn. It hit the wall and ricocheted, almost hitting Ms SJ, and then hit the barn door making a small hole. Ms SJ took a photograph of what she said was the hole, on 2 March 2025, which she produced. Ms SJ said that when the Respondent threw the hammer he jumped around and swore using words such as "*f*****g horses,*" "*f*****g don't know why I do this job*" and "*I f*****g hate them.*"
- 1.13 Ms SJ said that the noise caused *Boo*'s owner, Ms CR, to run over from the field in which she had been working. When she asked what had happened and whether the Respondent was okay he replied, "*it doesn't f*****g matter if I'm okay 'cos all that matters is that your f*****g horse gets shod.*" When Ms CR was told that *Boo* had stood on the Respondent's foot she said, "*that doesn't sound like Boo*" to which the Respondent replied, "*no, cos your f*****g horses are all a bunch of c**s, that what it is.*"
- 1.14 Ms SJ told the panel that she thought it was best for her to leave the scene at that point. She heard the Respondent's vehicle leave the yard about ten minutes later and had the impression he drove off quickly as she heard the vehicle's wheels spinning.
- 1.15 Later that same day, at 14.35, she messaged the Respondent on Facebook telling him she did not wish to have him back at the yard. She complained of what she said was his unprofessional behaviour which made her feel intimidated and added, "*The hammer you threw across the barn could have hit myself or the horse.*" She also wrote "*Our horses aren't getting worse nor are they c!ts.....*"
- 1.16 Ms SJ received no response to her message and discovered that the Respondent had blocked her from further communication with him on the Messenger App.
- 1.17 On 11 October 2024 she submitted a written complaint to the Council. In her written complaint she wrote that on an appointment previous to that of 2 October the Respondent "*hit one of the horses with his rasp as she wouldn't 'stand up'.*" She wrote that the Respondent shouted if *Star* moved and when she fed her said "*If I wanted you to get her feed I would tell you. Now she is a nightmare because you're feeding her.*" She also wrote that the Respondent was "*hammering the nails into her hood (sic, presumably 'hoof' is meant) harder and harder the more stressed out he became.*" After *Boo* had trodden on his foot "*he proceeded to throw his*

*hammer across the barn which ricocheted off the barn wall and just missed me and the horse. He really frightened me. Proceeded to tell me how much he hates horses and will be changing his job. That are (sic, presumably "our") horses are all getting "f*****g worse." When my friend came into the barn he told her "Your horse is a c**t."*

- 1.18 Ms CR told the Committee that when the Respondent arrived at the yard on 2 October he seemed to be in a bad mood. She went off to fix some fencing in a nearby field and left Ms SJ with the Respondent. She heard the Respondent shouting and went to see what was going on. She said that she noticed a hole in the barn door. She thought Ms SJ looked stressed and the Respondent seemed stressed. Ms SJ said that the Respondent had been shouting at her.
- 1.19 Ms CR said that she went back to the field but heard further shouting. On going back to see what had happened, she saw that Boo was shaking and the Respondent said, "*Your horse is a f*****g c**t.*" The Respondent said that Boo was rearing because she could hear Ms CR's voice but Ms CR thought the horse was rearing because the foot stand being used by the Respondent was too high and the horse was unable to balance. The Respondent continued to swear and complain that the horses he was shoeing were fidgeting. He also complained about mud in the yard, although Boo was being shod in a barn. Ms CR said that he was hammering in nails very aggressively and once the shoeing was complete, he sped off. She said that she never received a bill for his work.
- 1.20 Ms CR told the Committee that she made a handwritten statement to support Ms SJ's complaint. This was dated 20 October 2024 and was, she told the Committee, derived from a statement she had written in her diary for 2 October 2024. She produced her handwritten statement of 20 October 2024. She said that she could no longer find the diary as she had moved house.
- 1.21 In addition, Ms CR told the Committee that the Respondent had hit Boo with a metal rasp in August 2024. She said that her sister was present, that the Respondent kept losing his temper during the shoeing and told Boo to "*f*****g stand up!*". She said that the Respondent gave Boo a wallop with his metal rasp. Initially she had thought Boo was hit on the left side as she thought that was the side on which Boo had lost an eye but she later realised that in fact Boo had lost her eye on the right and had also been hit on that side. She said that she and her sister were in shock but did not say anything to the Respondent as there were not a lot of farriers available and she thought it might just be that the Respondent was having a bad day.
- 1.22 When cross-examined about this alleged episode, Ms CR said, initially, that she was on the left side, then the right, that the Respondent hit Boo really hard but she did not think he meant to hit the horse, that she was unable to say which part of the rasp struck Boo, and, initially, that her sister had a good view but later that her sister had not seen the episode so could not give a statement, although she had initially offered her as a witness to solicitors investigating the incident.

Submission of No case to answer in respect of Charge 1 (a).

- 1.23 At the close of the Council's case, Mr Corrie submitted that there was no case to answer in respect of Charge 1 (a). He submitted that the only witness to have given evidence about this was Ms CR and that her evidence was (a) inadequate, as she had not seen the rasp hit the horse and (b) tenuous, because inconsistent in a number of respects. He also relied upon the fact that no complaint was made to the Respondent at the time, that the matter had not been mentioned in the first statement prepared by Ms CR and that there was no evidence of any injury to Boo.
- 1.24 Mr Collis submitted that there was sufficient evidence to enable the allegation to proceed.

- 1.25 The legal adviser reminded the Committee of the test to be applied, as set out in the case of *R v Galbraith* [1981] 1 WLR 1039.
- 1.26 The Committee concluded that there was some evidence to support this allegation but that evidence was tenuous. It depended entirely on the oral evidence of Ms CR and cross-examination had brought out a number of significant inconsistencies in her evidence, together with an admission that she could not say which part of the rasp had hit *Boo*.
- 1.27 In all the circumstances the Committee was not satisfied that the evidence of Ms CR was sufficient to enable a properly directed Committee to find this allegation Proved.
- 1.28 The Committee therefore accepted the submission of Mr Corrie and decided that there was no case to answer in relation to Charge 1 (a).

The Respondent's evidence

- 1.29 The Respondent gave oral evidence to the Committee. He said that he attended the yard in the normal way and had three horses to shoe. The yard was muddy, and the weather was windy and got worse during his visit. It was, in his words "*a rough old day*." After shoeing the first horse, *Star* was presented to him and she seemed unsettled. Some food was given to her and she leaned forward to get at it, became unbalanced, and began to pull her hind foot away from the Respondent. The Respondent told Ms SJ that feeding the horse was not helping matters and he thought she took offence at that. He denied using anything like the words alleged in Charge 2 (a) ii and iii. As he continued shoeing *Star*, she became increasingly unsettled, snatching her rear feet away from the Respondent. The Respondent denied that he used any technique other than his usual technique for nailing shoes on. However, due to the way in which *Star* was fidgeting he had to tell her to "*Stand up*" several times, on occasion possibly in a raised and stern tone. He thought that this might be why Ms SJ thought he was being offensive or aggressive. He accepted that he became frustrated during this process and muttered "*for f**k's sake*" to himself but said that these words were not aimed at anyone.
- 1.30 After shoeing *Star* he said that he had a break and a cup of tea. The weather was becoming steadily worse, and it was decided to move into a small barn to continue the shoeing. The Respondent said that *Boo* became unsettled in the barn, as if she wanted to return outside, and her behaviour became steadily worse as the shoeing continued, so that when the Respondent was working on her hind legs she was snatching her legs away and threatening to kick. During one of these episodes, she planted her foot with great force on top of the Respondent's foot. At that point, the Respondent accepted that he said, "*f*****g horse*" and threw his hammer towards his toolbox near the back wall. He emphasised that this was nowhere near the door and that there was no chance of the hammer hitting the horse or anyone else. The horse was still standing on his foot. He had to shout and push the horse to get it off his foot and as he was walking away from the horse said, "*f*****g job*" and "*what a c**t*."
- 1.31 The Respondent said that he explained to Ms CR, who had returned to the barn and heard him use the word "*c**t*", that *Boo* had been badly behaved; he was injured but he felt that little consideration was being given to his welfare. He was asked if he was still going to get the horse done and said, in retaliation, words such as "*don't worry about me then as long as the horse gets done*." He denied swearing when saying this to Ms CR.
- 1.32 The Respondent said that he then finished the shoeing, packed his van, and gave an invoice to both Ms SJ and Ms CR. He accepted that his invoices for this work had never been paid. He had not bothered to chase payment as he understood from Ms SJ's message of the same day that he was not wanted back at the yard.

- 1.33 The Respondent also adduced evidence of his good character from three witnesses, Ms O' N, Ms P and Ms B who gave oral evidence by video-link. These witnesses described the Respondent as polite. They had never heard him use foul language.

Reopening of Respondent's case

- 1.34 When the hearing resumed on 17 November, Mr Corrie applied to reopen the Respondent's case so that he could put in evidence two copy invoices which the Respondent said he had issued to Ms SJ and Ms CR respectively. The copy invoices had only recently been obtained from the Respondent's accountant. Mr Corrie submitted that it would be fair to allow this further evidence to be admitted.
- 1.35 Mr Collis opposed the application on the ground that the Council's witnesses were now effectively unavailable to comment upon this evidence.
- 1.36 Having heard legal advice, the Committee decided to allow the application. It recognised that the Council's witnesses had had no opportunity to address this evidence but considered that both witnesses had been firm in their evidence that no invoices had been issued to them. On balance, the Committee concluded that fairness required the admission of the evidence. The Committee would assess the weight to be given to this evidence when considering its factual findings.

Further evidence offered by the Respondent

- 1.37 The Respondent told the Committee that he had issued invoices to both Ms SJ and Ms CR on 2 October 2024 and had recently obtained carbon copies of these invoices which had been held by his accountant. He said that he had not earlier appreciated the potential relevance of this documentation and had been very busy with family matters since the last hearing in July so that he had not asked his accountant for this documentation until quite recently.

Submissions and legal advice

- 1.38 Both parties produced helpful written submissions. Mr Corrie supplemented his written submissions with further oral submissions.
- 1.39 The legal assessor reminded the Committee of the burden and standard of proof, of the appropriate approach to witness testimony and of the relevance of character evidence.

2. DECISION OF THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE ON THE FACTS

- 2.1 Charge 1 (b):** *In August 2024, at an appointment, to shoe a horse named Boo belonging to CR at Ladwood Farm in Kent:*

*(b) used offensive and /or abusive and/or unprofessional words, more particularly "f*****g stand up!"*

- 2.2** This allegation was based upon the witness evidence of Ms CR. Ms CR wrote a statement dated 20 October 2024 to support Ms SJ's complaint. In that statement she wrote:

"Ben Price has been coming to our horses for sometime. During the first few visits he was always polite and kind.something changed with Ben's behaviour and when shoeing the horse's(sic) he would quickly become short tempered and aggressive.

My horse has one eye and will need to turn to see what is going on, obviously when this happens and Ben has her leg she will lose balance. But instead of being understanding he would shout "Stand up."

The statement then goes on to deal with the visit of 2 October 2024. It is noteworthy that in dealing with visits prior to October 2024 there is no reference to "*f*****g stand up!*". Nor is there any reference in the Complaint Form submitted by Ms SJ, dated 11 October 2024. She wrote "*the previous visit Ben hit one of the horses with his rasp as she wouldn't "Stand Up."*" Ms SJ must have received this information from Ms CR.

- 2.3 In the Committee's judgment the absence of any reference in the contemporaneous documentation to the expletive alleged is significant. The Committee does not consider that the unsupported evidence of Ms CR is sufficient to discharge the burden of proof which the Council bears.

- 2.4 Accordingly, the Committee finds Charge 1(b) Not Proved

- 2.5 **Charge 2: On 2 October 2024 at Ladwood Farm in Kent**

(a) In the course of shoeing a horse named Star belonging to SJ used offensive and/or abusive and/or unprofessional words more particularly words to the following effect:

*(i) "f*****g stand up!"*

- 2.6 The Committee had regard to the way in which the shoeing operation was going, the Respondent's admission that he did say "*for f**k's sake*" during the process and the frustration which the Respondent accepts that he felt at the time. In her message to the Respondent, at 14.35 of 2 October 2024, Ms SJ complained that in her view the Respondent had been really unprofessional, that she had felt intimidated by his behaviour, towards the horses and her, and that she did not like his tone. Taking all of this evidence into account, the Committee considered it more likely than not that the Respondent did say, on this occasion, "*F*****g Stand up!*" The Respondent accepted in his oral evidence that swearing in this way in the presence of an owner was unprofessional and offensive and the Committee agrees.

- 2.7 Accordingly, the Committee finds Charge 2 (a) i Proved.

- 2.8 *(ii) do you wanna f*****g do it?*

*(iii) what the f**k did you feed her for"*

- 2.9 As these remarks were alleged to form part of the same conversation the Committee considered these sub- paragraphs together. The Committee noted that a conversation on the subject of feed was referred to in Ms SJ's complaint form of 11 October 2024. At that time Ms SJ wrote: "*I proceeded to get her [Star] some Feed to help. He then said "if I wanted you to get her feed I would tell you. Now she is a nightmare because You're feeding her."*

- 2.10 The Committee considered the absence of any expletives in this account to be significant, the more so as Ms SJ was making a formal complaint to the Council. The Committee also noted that there was no reference in the complaint form to the possibility that the process of hot shoeing was causing Star to be agitated and in pain and thereby leading to the remark alleged at sub-paragraph ii.

- 2.11 The Committee did not consider that Ms SJ's unsupported evidence, which was inconsistent with the contemporaneous documentation, was sufficient to discharge the burden of proof.

- 2.12 Accordingly the Committee found Charges 2 a (ii) and (iii) Not Proved.
- 2.13 **Charge 2 (b) i:** *In the course of shoeing a horse named Boo belonging to CR:*
- (i) *threw a hammer across the barn;*
- 2.14 Ms SJ referred to this allegation in her first message to the Respondent sent on 2 October 2024. She wrote: *"The hammer you threw across the barn could have hit myself or the horse."* In her complaint from of 11 October 2024 she wrote: *"She [Boo] moved back and trod on his foot, he proceeded to throw his hammer across the barn which ricocheted off the barn wall and just missed me and the horse"*. At this point there was no allegation that the hammer was thrown with such force that it made a hole in the barn door after ricocheting off the wall. A photograph of the hole alleged to have been made was not taken until March 2025.
- 2.15 In his oral evidence the Respondent accepted that he "threw" the hammer when *Boo* stood on him but said that he threw it down and towards his toolbox which was situated at the back wall of the barn and away from both the horse and Ms SJ.
- 2.16 The reference to this episode in both of Ms SJ's earliest accounts is, in the Committee's judgment, powerful evidence that the hammer was thrown and that Ms SJ was frightened by it. It is not however evidence that the hammer was thrown with such force as to cause a hole in the door after ricocheting off a wall. As *Boo* was standing between the hammer and the door the Committee does not consider it plausible that damage to the door was caused in this way. That conclusion is not however sufficient to undermine completely Ms SJ's account.
- 2.17 The Committee has concluded that the probability is that the hammer was thrown as an instantaneous reaction to *Boo* standing on the Respondent's foot, which must have been both extremely painful and alarming for him. The likelihood is that the Respondent wished to release the hammer so as to have both hands free to push the horse off his foot. To enable him to do this, he threw the hammer across the barn, as a reaction and in the agony of the moment.
- 2.18 Accordingly, the Committee finds this charge, which has been admitted although not in the terms above, Proved on the basis set out above.
- 2.19 (ii): *used offensive and/or abusive and/or unprofessional words, more particularly the following or words to a similar effect.*
- A:** *"f*****g horses"*
- B:** *"f*****g don't know why I do this job"*
- E:** *"your f*****g horses are all a bunch of c**ts."*
- 2.20 The Respondent admitted the allegations above but did not accept the precise words used. In relation to **A**, he accepted that he said, *"f*****g horse,"* in relation to **B** that he said, *"f*****g job"* and in relation to **E** that he said, *"the horse is a c**t."* In the Committee's judgment the words accepted by the Respondent are equally as unprofessional and offensive as those used in the Charge, which in any event is formulated as an allegation that the words specified or words to similar effect (emphasis added) were said. In the Committee's judgment the words accepted by the Respondent are words to similar effect as those specified in the Charge. In the case of **E**, the Committee considered that the words used, whether those in the Charge or in the Respondent's formulation (which is largely consistent with the words remembered by Ms CR as recorded in her witness statement), were not only offensive and unprofessional but also abusive, as they were addressed directly to the owner and purported to characterise her horse or horses.

- 2.21 Accordingly the Committee finds Charges 2 b ii **A, B** and **E** Proved.
- 2.22 **C:** “I f*****g hate them.”
- 2.23 The Respondent denied saying these words. The Committee had regard to the surrounding circumstances. It took into account that the Respondent must have been in a good deal of pain and that he accepted that he was swearing at the time. It noted that the complaint form submitted by Ms SJ included the following: “*Proceeded to tell me How much he hates horses and will be changing his job.*” Taking all of this account, the Committee considers that it is more probable than not that the Respondent did say the words alleged or words to similar effect. The language used was unprofessional and offensive.
- 2.24 Accordingly the Committee finds Charge 2 (b) ii C Proved
- 2.25 **D:** “it doesn’t f*****g matter if I’m okay ‘ cos all that matters is that your f*****g horse gets shod”.
- 2.26 The Respondent accepted the gist of this remark but denied that he said “f*****fg”. The Committee took into account the surrounding circumstances as outlined in the preceding paragraphs. It concluded that it was probable that the expletive was used, as alleged by Ms SJ. Its use was consistent with the expletives used in the rest of the conversation, as recalled by Ms SJ and Ms CR. In the Committee’s assessment it was offensive and unprofessional, and also abusive as directed specifically to an owner, in this case Ms CR.
- 2.27 The Respondent admitted Charges 3 and 4 in their entirety and those Charges are found Proved by admission.

3. SUBMISSIONS OF THE PARTIES ON SERIOUS MISCONDUCT IN A PROFESSIONAL RESPECT

- 3.1 Mr Collis produced written submissions. He contended that the Respondent’s conduct on 2 October 2024 and his persistent failures in relation to his obligations to provide Annual Declarations and Returns amounted to serious misconduct in a professional respect.
- 3.2 Mr Corrie did not seek to submit that the Committee’s findings of fact did not amount to serious misconduct in a professional respect. He submitted, however, that the case did not involve poor treatment of horses but was concerned, in respect of Charge 2, with relationships with clients. In respect of Charges 3 and 4, he drew the Committee’s attention to the way in which the obligation to complete Annual Declarations and Returns had gradually evolved.

4. DECISION OF THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE ON SERIOUS MISCONDUCT IN A PROFESSIONAL RESPECT

- 4.1 The legal assessor reminded the Committee that the question of serious professional misconduct was a matter for its judgment and that appropriate standards of conduct were to be derived from *The Farrier, Approved Training Farrier & Apprentice Code of Professional Conduct 2024* (“the Code”).
- 4.2 The Committee first considered the matters arising under Charge 2. It had regard in particular to paragraph 34 of the Code which provides:

“The farrier should treat the client and the client’s representatives with respect and observe professional courtesies. This would include the use of appropriate and respectful language and behaviour.”

- 4.3 The Respondent had rightly acknowledged that his behaviour had departed from this standard on 2 October 2024, to the extent that two clients felt intimidated and, in their view, their horses were also affected by the Respondent’s manner. The language used was clearly unacceptable and the Committee was in no doubt that the Respondent’s behaviour in this matter amounted to serious misconduct in a professional respect.
- 4.4 The Committee did not, however, consider that the Respondent’s action in throwing his hammer across the barn amounted to serious misconduct in a professional respect. The Committee has already characterised this as an “agony of the moment” response when *Boo* trod on his foot and maintained pressure on the foot.
- 4.5 The Respondent failed to complete Annual Returns and Declarations over a period of seven years, despite several chasing letters reminding him of his obligations in this respect. He was also late in submitting his 2024 return. As the 2024 *Code* (and its predecessors) make clear it is of fundamental importance that the Council is annually updated in relation to contact details, the holding of professional indemnity insurance and convictions and cautions. The public rightly expects no less. A registered farrier who persistently defaults on this obligation and ignores chasing letters will inevitably be guilty of serious misconduct in a professional respect. The Committee finds that the Respondent’s conduct in relation to Charges 3 and 4 also amounted to serious misconduct in a professional respect.

5. DECISION OF THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE AS TO SANCTION

- 5.1 Mr Collis confirmed that the Respondent had been admitted to the Register on 1 September 2012 and had no previous regulatory history. He submitted that an aggravating feature in respect of Charges 3 and 4 was the period of time over which the Respondent’s misconduct extended. He acknowledged that the Respondent’s misconduct did not involve financial gain and that the Respondent had made efforts to avoid any repetition.
- 5.2 The Respondent gave further oral evidence. He produced a detailed reflective piece, a certificate confirming attendance at an anger management course and details relating to his present family circumstances.
- 5.3 In his submissions, Mr Corrie emphasised the extent of the remedial work done by the Respondent. He submitted that this showed that the Respondent had developed an appropriate level of insight such that the risk of any repetition was negligible. He also referred the Committee to the positive testimonials, the remorse shown by the Respondent and the absence of other complaints in relation to the type of behaviour evidenced in the Committee’s findings in relation to Charge 2. Mr Corrie submitted that a reprimand or warning would be proportionate.
- 5.4 The legal assessor reminded the Committee of the principles to be found in the Indicative Sanctions Guidance and of the overarching need to arrive at a proportionate outcome to the case.
- 5.5 The Committee first considered aggravating features in relation to each Charge. In relation to the behaviour evidenced at Charge 2, the Committee considered that the Respondent had breached the trust placed in him by the owners of *Star* and *Boo*. In relation to Charges 3 and 4 the Respondent had shown a disregard for the role of the regulator which had extended over a significant period of time.

- 5.6 In relation to mitigating features, and Charge 2, the Committee accepted that no harm had been caused to the animals, that the Respondent's behaviour took place at one appointment only and that it could be said that it was behaviour undertaken without opportunity for full reflection.
- 5.7 The most important mitigation in respect of Charge 2, however, was the insight and remorse shown by the Respondent subsequently. The Respondent's impressive reflective piece, supplemented by his oral evidence, showed genuine insight and remorse. The Committee noted in particular the emphasis it placed upon the Respondent's understanding of the impact of his behaviour on others, as well as on the practical steps he had taken to avoid any recurrence. The Committee was satisfied that the risk of any repetition of this behaviour was very low.
- 5.8 The Committee also took into account the absence of any previous regulatory history and the positive testimonials produced by the Respondent.
- 5.9 There was less mitigation for the failure to submit Annual Returns and Declarations, but the Committee noted the Respondent's resolve not to transgress in future and acknowledged that his failures in this respect were not designed to conceal the absence of professional indemnity or the presence of convictions or cautions.
- 5.10 The Committee first considered whether to take no further action. It concluded that such a course would be inappropriate. There was nothing in the particular circumstances of this case which would justify such a course.
- 5.11 No useful purpose would be served by postponing sanction.
- 5.12 The Committee next considered the proportionality of a warning and/or reprimand. It noted that the circumstances in which a warning and/or reprimand might be considered to be appropriate included cases where the misconduct is at the lower end of the spectrum of seriousness, there is no future risk to animals or the public and there is evidence of insight.
- 5.13 In the Committee's judgment these features were present in this case. The Respondent's behaviour on 2 October 2024 had been unpleasant, but the Committee bore in mind that this was an isolated event, involving foul language; the Respondent had now developed an appropriate level of insight; and the risks of repetition were negligible. The Committee was also satisfied that the Respondent now clearly understood the need to complete Annual Returns on time.
- 5.14 In accordance with its usual practice, the Committee also considered a suspension order but concluded that such an order would serve no useful purpose in this case and would be disproportionate.
- 5.15 The Committee considered that a reprimand was appropriate and required in respect of the Respondent's past misconduct. The Committee also thought it appropriate to warn the Respondent as to his future conduct in terms of the need to fulfil his obligations in respect of the requirement to complete and submit Annual Returns on time.

Disciplinary Committee

17 & 18 November 2025