

Visitors urged not to touch moor ponies due to disease

NEWS STAFF

newsdesk@indyonline.co.uk

Visitors to Dartmoor are urged to avoid all contact with ponies due to a disease spreading among the animals.

The Dartmoor Livestock Protection Society and the Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust have issued a joint statement urging people to only enjoy the herds from a distance after a number of ponies have been seen to be carrying strangles.

Strangles is a highly-contagious and difficult to manage bacterial infection of the respiratory system. It can be spread through direct contact with affected equines, or indirectly on items such as clothing, gloves or even cars.

It is a challenging disease to manage and eradicate because infected horses and ponies become carriers, where even though they appear healthy and show no outward signs, they can be intermittently infective to other ponies.

Karla McKechnie, livestock protection officer, said: "We are aware that a number of ponies on Dartmoor currently have strangles. Infected animals are being monitored by their owners and by myself. In order to help contain the spread of the disease we are urging all visitors to the moor not to go near or touch the ponies. Strangles is



A highly-contagious infection is spreading among ponies on Dartmoor

highly-infectious and transmitted via contact and we need everyone to work with us in helping to prevent its spread.

"At the same time, we are also urging the public not to be tempted

to feed the ponies or interact with them. There have been a number of reported cases countrywide of horses and ponies choking to death when they've been fed unsuitable food. Feeding of ponies has been di-

rectly linked to an increase in pony-related road accidents by encouraging them to the roadside in the expectation of being fed. Our message is to admire the ponies from a distance."

Fire was caused accidentally

Fire investigators say a massive blaze on Dartmoor was caused accidentally by a member of the public.

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service said the fire on Thursday, February 11 near Peter Tavy, damaged six square kilometres of moorland but was not arson as first suspected.

Crews from nine stations in Devon battled in fierce winds and low visibility to control the flames. Firefighters said the blaze was hard to get to and they were forced to work in 'defensive mode'.

Dartmoor Forest officials checked the area the next day and said the damage was superficial as the ground was wet. Officials explained although it is winter, wildfires can spread quickly and warned people against using any naked flames on the moors, including cigarettes, campfires and barbecues.

A spokesperson said: "Wildfires don't just happen in the summer. We go to twice as many moorland fires in the three months of February-April than we do for the rest of the year. We would like to remind everyone not to travel on the moors unless it is an essential journey."

Several other areas of moorland in Cornwall caught fire last week with a large gorse fire on Bodmin Moor near Cardinham on Thursday and a blaze at a nature reserve near Wadebridge on Tuesday, February 9, as well as other smaller ones.

EU funding continues to support Cornish businesses until 2023

From providing support programmes to developing high quality workspaces and investing in research and innovation projects – new and existing businesses across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly are continuing to benefit from European funding through the €600 million Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Growth Programme.

Part funded through the Growth Programme, the Growth Hub has helped thousands of local businesses work smarter, develop and grow. The Penryn based Letter Box Hamper company, which sends hampers containing luxury produce in letterbox sized packages to customers around the world, is one of the many local businesses which has been taking full advantage of this expert funded support.

After initially receiving help from the Growth Hub three years ago to launch his new business, Letter Box director Jonathan Wingfield is working once again with their team on plans to expand the premises

and increase the company's overseas exports and business customers.

"Even when you are lucky enough to have access to fantastic products, starting your own business from scratch is not easy," said Jonathan. "We are very grateful for the support we have received from the Growth Hub team. 95% of our business is now outside of Cornwall with customers from Scotland to Australia and Hong Kong, and we are keen to expand into other parts of the world."

To support growth and meet business needs across Cornwall, over £26 million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is also being invested in developing high quality and fit for purpose workspaces.

Workspace such as Sector 2, at the Aerohub Business Park near Newquay, received £4.3m funding from ERDF to support Cornish firms' expansion ambitions such as pioneering energy company Bennamann. The company, which moved to Sector 2 in 2019, is working with a range of partners



and local farmers to develop and commercialise the use of new technologies that turn organic waste from farms into biomethane; a zero-carbon fuel that can be used to power lorries and tractors, heat households and businesses, provide hot water and even charge electric vehicles.

After successfully securing a grant from ERDF, Bennamann is also working on an exciting £1.22m research and development project which is looking at maximising the use of on-site renewable energy resources to establish an independent energy farm in Cornwall.

"We are very proud to be a Cornish company that has the potential to radically change the global energy market and look forward to putting Cornwall at the forefront of this

pioneering renewable energy innovation," said Chris Mann, Bennamann Chairman and co-founder. "Without the funding from the ERDF it simply would not have happened, it could not have come at a better time for the county and us."

Another company successfully capitalising on the EU funding available in Cornwall, is Morek Engineering. Following support from ERDF funded programmes PROPEL Cornwall and Tevi, as well as the Growth Hub, Morek was set up 18 months ago by naval architect Bob Colclough to provide specialist technical consultancy services and deliver offshore wind, wave and tidal projects across the world. Backed by further ERDF funding from the research and innovation Marine-i programme,



European Union
European Regional
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Morek is currently developing new specialist software to safely transport the huge equipment needed for installing offshore wind turbines by sea.

"Support from these organisations has played a key part in our development and growth," said Bob. "Many new companies don't realise this support is available or how important it is to develop their business."

As part of the Brexit deal it was agreed that existing EU funded programmes such as the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Growth Programme would be completed, with its associated funded projects running up until 2023. To find out more visit: www.cornwallislesofscillygrowthprogramme.org.uk