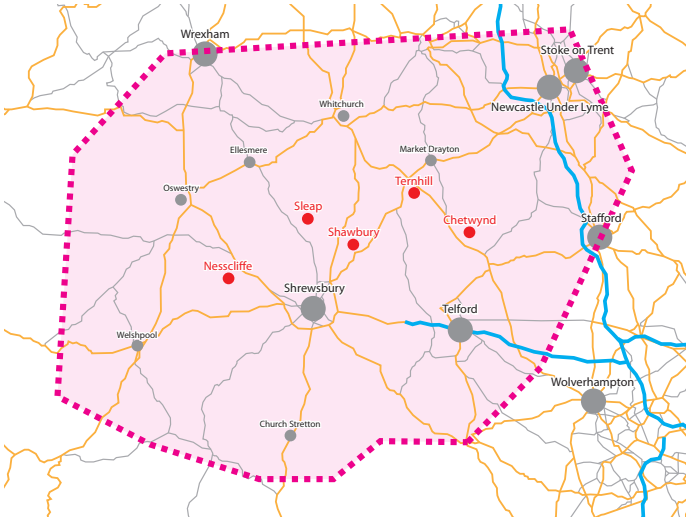
RAF Shawbury, in partnership with The British Horse Society (BHS), is keen to work with the horse riding community to promote safety awareness in their Be Seen, Be Safer campaign.

Military Low Flying

For many years, operations have shown that the ability to operate effectively at low-level by day and night is essential for all military aircraft as they support forces on the ground or carry out Search and Rescue activities.

Effective training at low-level in the UK is therefore an essential aspect of preparation for war-fighting, peace-support or peace-keeping operations. Some low-level training is conducted overseas, but most is conducted in the UK, and is distributed as widely as possible throughout the country.

Shropshire, parts of Staffordshire, Cheshire and Powys all lie within Low Flying Area 9, which is a Dedicated Helicopter Training Area.



Avoiding Horse Riders

Military aircraft will avoid over-flying horse riders if they can be identified in sufficient time, and if it is safe to do so. In particular, helicopter crews are highly trained to identify and avoid potential conflicts. However, conducting violent avoiding manoeuvres when close to riders significantly increases the potential for disturbance. So if riders are seen late, military aircraft will usually over-fly without manoeuvring as this is the safest option.







Be Seen – Be Safer

MOD flight trials have shown that high-visibility clothing significantly improves the detection range of riders in open countryside. Whilst high-visibility clothing may not prevent an over-flight as there may be other safety considerations, it does provide a considerable, cost-effective improvement to rider safety.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What heights do military aircraft fly down to?

A. Fixed-wing aircraft routinely fly down to 250 feet, but occasionally operate down to 100 feet in three designated tactical training areas. Helicopters routinely operate down to 100 feet, but may operate down to ground level for certain tasks.

Q. Can low flying aircraft permanently avoid over-flying horses and stables?

A. Some more vulnerable groups of riders, for example RDA sessions, are given avoidance status. However, the very large number of horses in the UK means that avoiding every area where there are horses would significantly reduce the area available for training. Instead, we distribute low flying as widely as possible to reduce the amount in any particular area.

Q. Is it possible to gain temporary avoidance for specific events?

A. In most circumstances the answer is yes. We already work with a variety of equestrian organisations to ensure potential disturbance to major events is minimised, and are usually able to grant a temporary avoidance to organised events where large numbers of horses and riders are gathered. Please visit our website for more information and email SHY-CERO@mod.gov.uk to apply for temporary avoidance.





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 'Preyer 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 react? 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 'Preyer Reflex' may indicate the horse senses danger, and where the danger is coming from. Horses can distinguish specific words and become familiar with a riders 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. Relax and try to keep the horse listening to you until the helicopter has passed.

Further information:

For low flying complaints within Low Flying Area 9

Write or call: Corporate Engagement and Relations Officer (CERO)
RAF Shawbury
SY4 4DZ

Tel: 01939 250351 x7177

Email: SHY-CERO@mod.gov.uk

For further information on the high visibilty campaign visit RAF Shawbury's website at: https://www.raf.mod.uk/our-organisation/stations/raf-shawbury/flying-info/

Or contact the MOD:

Ministry of Defence Air Staff
Complaints and Enquiries Unit
Low Flying Operations Squadron
RAF Wittering
Peterborough
PE8 6HB

Tel: 01780 417558

E-mail: SWK-LowFlying@mod.gov.uk

For further information on low flying visit the MOD's website: https://www.gov.uk/low-flying-in-your-area/

British Horse Society

Tel: 02476 840500

www.horseaccidents.org.uk
www.bhs.org.uk

The British Horse Society is a registered charity, Nos 210504 and SC038516



ROYAL AIR FORCE SHAWBURY

Be Seen - Be Safer

Safety advice for riders



Do you ride horses or drive carriages in Shropshire or its adjacent counties?

If so, then this leaflet is essenti reading for you.

RAF Shawbury in partnership with