

As an aged pensioner who has been associated with horses and ponies all my life (I am now 71) and I am an official pony and advanced dressage judge, I have struggled to maintain my interest. Because I receive a pension I could get no assistance to maintain my pony stud which has not been set up as a business as it would certainly be running at a loss at this point of development so I had to drain my personal savings to survive.

The EI fiasco which we were not responsible for introducing caused great distress to the degree that I was unable to purchase food for myself and now owe friends for their assistance when times improve. Now we are expected to finance any possible future outbreaks. Would we gain assistance as a pensioner? I doubt it.

What chance do we have of gaining help if things go wrong? There are many people out in the community who really struggle to survive and give their children something to learn from by joining pony clubs etc. This keeps their children off the streets to a degree and away from the seedy side of life. Many of these children will lose their interest as families who struggle will not be able to keep up. The outlook for these children would be sad to say the least and boredom breeds problems.

I think a lot more thought should be taken as to what will happen if levies are placed on the people who can least afford it. We were in total lockdown but the thoroughbred industry was allowed to continue with restrictions which appears to be a rule for one and not for the other. I beg that proper and respectable treatment be given to those who most warrant it at this stage Gordon Marsden Llanbrecon Welsh Ponies and Advanced Level Dressage judge who is expected to ride at a higher level to proceed to international standard of judging which is for the benefit of the Equestrian sport. It is difficult with the sports rules and regulations as I am expected to ride again at almost 72 years to meet the newly introduced rules for judges upgrading. I struggle to get the horse to enable me to try to achieve it and now I am still trying to build up enough funds to enable me to condition the horse to enable me to compete. Additional levies will mean that all will have to be sold at a loss and I will be unable to continue with my lifelong passion through no fault of my own. A fair go. I think not...