



Grassroots Gazette Press Office

Limerick

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Equestrian Community unites to promote 'HAY' Campaign and launch Equestrian Mental Health Week

Groundbreaking 'How are Ya' campaign supported by Ireland's largest Representative Equine Bodies. Blue Monday to be replaced by HAY Monday

A historic mental health campaign for equestrians has been launched with the goal of raising awareness and reducing the stigma around mental health within the equestrian community.

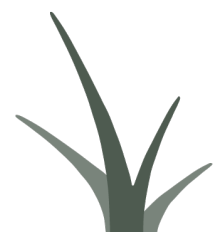
The campaign, entitled "How Are Ya" was created by Shane Rooney and is being run in Partnership with The Grassroots Gazette. It is being supported by Ireland's biggest representative bodies and associations for equestrians. Its aim is to address the unique mental health challenges faced by equestrians and to give them the support they need to take care of their mental health, both on and off the horse.

"Equestrians are a tight-knit community, and we are committed to taking care of each other, both on and off the horse," said **Shane Rooney**, writer for the Grassroots Gazette who are leading the launch of the campaign.

"35% of Irish Jockeys met the threshold for depression as well as 41% of racehorse trainers. We know from the Grassroots movements that this is not limited just to Horse Racing in the Equine Industry. This is why we are launching the HAY 'How are Ya' campaign.

"This is about creating a safe space for equestrians to talk about their mental health. By coming together and raising awareness, we hope to create a culture of openness and support within the equestrian community, where people feel comfortable talking about their mental health and seeking help when they need it" said **Shane McCarthy**, the Campaign Organiser and CEO of the Grassroots Gazette.

"The third Monday of January or Blue Monday has been said to be the most depressing day of the year. But we want to change that! We want the third Monday of January to be known for the beginning of the HAY campaign and to reinforce the positivity around speaking about our mental health with friends and family.





“It will also be the launch of Ireland’s first ever Equestrian Mental Health Week which will continue for years to come. We will take back control of Blue Monday and call it HAY Monday. We will take a negative and turn it into a positive for many people.

This campaign is historic, the community is coming together to support one another, and it marks the first time that a coalition of this magnitude of equestrian organisations have united to address mental health issues in the industry. This is a landmark moment for the equestrian community.

Ireland’s biggest representative bodies and associations for equestrians have all committed their support for the campaign including; Horse Sport Ireland, Horse Racing Ireland (Equip), Showjumping Ireland, Eventing Ireland, Dressage Ireland, The Restricted Trainers Association, The Irish Stable Staff Association, Irish Pony Society, British Horse Society Ireland, The Army Equitation School, Equitas, The Next Generation and The Irish Field.

“Horse Sport Ireland (HSI) is firmly behind the ‘HAY - How Are Ya’ campaign as it aims to provide vital awareness around - and support for – equestrians struggling with mental illness. From yard staff to grooms, athletes, coaches and trainers, nobody is immune from suffering with their mental health. As governing body for equestrian sports in Ireland, HSI offers support to those struggling, and that support is available confidentially at support@horsesportireland.ie” said - **Denis Duggan** CEO of Horse Sport Ireland.

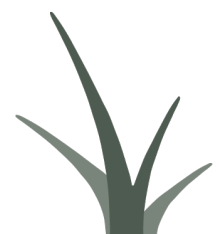
“Eventing Ireland is delighted to get behind the Hay - How Are Ya campaign. We recognise its importance to the Equestrian industry and are proud to support the incentive,” said - **Alison Packman** General Manager of Eventing Ireland.

“Dressage Ireland are delighted to be involved in the HAY campaign to address the important issue of Mental Health within the Equestrian Industry. With information comes recognition and then the power to make positive change,” said **Marguerite Kavanagh**, Chairperson Dressage Ireland.

“Showjumping Ireland is delighted to be involved in such a worthy campaign, which hopefully will start many conversations,” said **Christy Murphy**, Chairman Showjumping Ireland.

“The Irish Pony Society is proud to be supporting the HAY Campaign. No matter how black the cloud seems or how big your problems are. There’s always an answer. Just reach out to someone and say I’m not ok,” said **Clive Johnson**, Chairman The Irish Pony Society.

“The health and well-being of the people in our industry is so important and highlighting this through The Hay campaign can hopefully make some positive change on how we look at mental health. Equip offer a





24hr helpline available to all. Please see equuip.ie or phone 1800 314 661," said **Elaine Burke**, from Equuip.

The HAY campaign has also received support from notable equestrians, such as Rachel Blackmore, AP McCoy, Willy Mullins, Paul Townend, Nina Carberry, Shark Hanlon, Danny Mullins, Shane Foley, Mark Enright, Richie Condon, Zoe Smalley, Paul O'Shea, Darragh Byrne, Abi Lyle, Sorrel Klatzko and Caroline Miller.

"Check up on 2-3 of your friends and just ask HAY - How Are Ya as everyone might not be. Someone may need to have a chat. You never know, you may have helped someone. We need to talk about the importance of mental health," said **AP McCoy**.

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NOTES TO EDITOR:

This is Ireland's first ever Equestrian Mental Health Week.

The equestrian community is inviting all members of the public to support and participate in this historic campaign. For more information and to get involved, please visit www.TheGrassrootsGazette.ie

The Grassroots Gazette is Ireland's fastest growing Equine Media Brand with close to 40,000 people signed up across the last 12 months from across Ireland, The UK and around the world. The Grassroots Gazette is an online media brand that covers stories for the grassroots community from right across the equine industry. Through campaigns, content and online media, we are here to "Be The Change" in the equine industry.

Shane McCarthy, the Campaign Organiser and CEO of the Grassroots Gazette is available for Interview.

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