

## Statement from Natural England

In April 2008 all seahorse species which normally occur in our coastal waters received full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

This protection means that it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb any seahorse. Photography and filming of seahorses is likely to cause disturbance particularly if a flash is used and could constitute an offence. Natural England can issue licences which allow the disturbance of seahorses but will normally only issue such licences if there is a conservation, educational or scientific benefit.

A licence is not required if the photography does not cause any disturbance to the seahorses. This could possibly be achieved if the photos are taken without a flash and are taken for only a few seconds ideally taking just one quick image. Subsequent returns to the specific location which are known to contain seahorses is likely to cause disturbance.

In certain circumstances the photography may cause no additional disturbance, for example, if you accidentally caught a seahorse in a crab pot and photographed it this would not be an offence providing no additional disturbance was caused by the photography and every effort was made to re-release the seahorse as soon as practical."