

ROAD TO RESTART

GUIDANCE NOTES



Although COVID restrictions have now been lifted across the UK and Channel Islands, any first return to activity still needs careful planning and preparation.

We need to be understanding towards those who still feel cautious or worried about removing all the controls (face coverings, social distancing etc.) and we should continue to be sensitive to individuals' personal preferences and concerns.

Two years on, there will still be volunteers/staff and participants who are excited about getting back to RDA, **and are desperate to do so**, but there will also be some who are still worried and scared, and there will be others who want to return but who cannot for their own **health and welfare reasons**. Do you have any participants who are **still waiting patiently to return** and if so, will the group still have enough staff / volunteers willing and able to support them?

In addition, the groups will need to prepare the venue by providing the essentials around hygiene, such as clean handwashing facilities and sanitisers, **and being mindful of others' possible concerns around the need for personal space and that face coverings are no longer legally required**. If based at a riding establishment the group should check their establishment meets the requirements of their relevant member body e.g. BHS/ABRS/BC.

Last, but not least, there will be a need to prepare the equines - this task will vary between groups depending on who owns and looks after them, but it is important to ensure they are fit and ready to start work. Any concerns about equines being 'fresh' and the risks associated should of course be fully explored in any risk assessments.

Take time to consider what is needed and do it in a way that suits your group and everyone involved.

What do groups need to do?

We recommend that those groups that **may not feel quite able to restart even at this late stage** should speak with their regional and county teams, to explore all options and consider what actions they may want to take/ **support they may need to begin**.

Before starting, RDA Groups will need to send a signed **Road to Restart Trustee Checklist** to RDA National Office (groupsupport@rda.org.uk) **to confirm the preparedness of the group to return, and to put in place measures to reduce any other health and safety risks of coming back to sessions after such a long break**. **Groups must wait for formal confirmation that they have been signed off to restart, before holding their first session or activity**. **Sign-off needs to take place before any gathering of RDA people – this may include volunteer training and does not necessarily mean sessions involving participants**.

To facilitate this all groups will need to go through the questions in the **Road to Restart – Are You Ready?** document and **include hygiene/ biosecurity elements within their risks assessments**, taking action as required. Some groups may be able to do this quickly – others may take time to complete. By following this process your group will be able to demonstrate that you have taken the correct steps and so will be covered within your RDA insurance.

In addition, to support with the preparation work required, we have provided the following resources. These are here to help you. They do not have to be used.

- ✓ Equine Assessment and Induction Form for riding and a separate one for driving
- ✓ Example Resources and Posters

When considering if groups are in a position to get started, once allowed, the following points are given to support the decision-making process:

Equines

- Equines cannot become infected with COVID-19 and therefore their breath or respiratory secretions are not infective to humans. They can act like a fomite though, much like any surface (stable door, saddle, teacup etc.) – if an infected person coughs on the equine, then a second person touches the equine and then their face. Washing hands and not touching the face would be the most obvious solution. Antiseptic washes, such as Hibiscrub or Malaseb, may reduce potential risk but are not recommended as it may have harmful effects on the equine's skin – some get a contact dermatitis and its regular use may affect the normal skin microflora.
- Feet would be an important thing to consider, especially if shoes have been removed during lockdown. If the equine is normally shod when in work but is now barefoot, shoes will probably need to go back on ahead of a return to work. Some hooves may have cracked and others may have gone slightly footsore, and this may take a few weeks to settle down once reshod.
- Fitness is going to be important but will be hugely variable depending if equines have been exercised or just turned away, and it's quite tricky to assess. The expected work load and type of exercise will have an impact as well. Changes in weight assessment may be helpful and possibly response to, and recovery from, exercise e.g. – how fast does the horse's respiratory rate return to normal following exercise. It can take several weeks to build up fitness if the equines haven't been doing any regular exercise (very much like us sadly!).
- Dentistry – equines only grow or erupt 2-3mm of tooth per year so if the annual rasp has been missed during lockdown, it is unlikely that this should present a big problem that would prevent returning to work. An equine having difficulty eating or dropping food is different though and should be seen by an EDT or vet prior to putting a bit in.
- Vaccinations – The tetanus component of vaccines lasts for 2-3 years so is probably okay for most equines. The influenza protection will start to diminish sooner than that – protection maybe 14-15 months. If the equines aren't leaving the yard to go to competitions etc. there should be minimal risk of catching influenza if the yearly boosters have lapsed. A lot of vets are now doing vaccinations, but some still are not. Follow the individual yard's vet's advice – they are best placed to assess the risk/benefit. The veterinary governing bodies are due to re-evaluate their guidance in another week.
- PPE and Sanitisation – Even though PPE will not be used as standard now, there will undoubtedly be individual volunteers, staff or riders who will choose to wear these and all equines need to be prepared. It is essential that equines are acclimatised to the new environment before any RDA riders take part; this includes them getting used to the smell of sanitisers used, feeling people wearing disposable gloves and seeing people wearing masks.
- All equines will need to be re-assessed, following this enforced 'rest'; the impact of this will vary depending on their fitness level pre-lockdown and also what, if any, exercise and training has been done in the interim. Weight and condition will need to be checked and all will need to be inducted into work again. To help there is a form that you can use to support re-introducing them into RDA.

Volunteers and Staff

- We know that groups are doing a great job of keeping in touch with their volunteers. It's really important to keep them updated on what is (or isn't) happening; letting them know and keeping them involved in the group's planning process.
- To understand if a group can get started, one thing they must do is find out which volunteers are able and willing (they may have changed circumstances or just not want to take the risk at the moment) to help. Many volunteers may have received COVID vaccines and may feel more comfortable in being involved in session activity than others. It's important to contact everyone to discuss what the group's plans are and to find out what they are willing to do to help.
- You may also have volunteers who want to come back and help, but it may not be possible – perhaps you only have a need for **a small team with your current rider numbers**, so it is important to be honest but also mindful that some people will be upset that they haven't been chosen to help. Please reassure them that it's not that they are not valued, talk through the plan and let them know you want them back as soon as possible.
- Any volunteers attending sessions **should be briefed on any hygiene arrangements etc. that the group has chosen to keep in place, prior to being involved in any RDA activities. It may be helpful to have any related information prominently displayed so that volunteers are reminded of it when they attend a session.**
- New volunteers can be taken on at the group if appropriate. The usual application form, references and disclosure check will be needed.
- Groups can take on new participants as it is possible to safely undertake the necessary pre-participation physical assessments **with common-sense precautions in place, for your setting.**

Coaching Sessions

Initial sessions must put SAFETY FIRST. Session plans should go back to basics - consider it as a first session, even for your experienced participants. Focus on balance, strength and confidence.

Groups will need to consider:-

1. Which participants can realistically take part – whether independently or with support from a carer (who may need to be trained and have their Basic Training Record Sheet completed)
2. Feasibility of private sessions or sessions of reduced numbers, with sufficient time between sessions **to allow for a comfortable changeover period**

Safeguarding

All those needing face to face training/ **renewals** will be expected to attend a face to face course either in person, or via live online courses using platforms such as Zoom. **RDA is able to run online face to face courses free of charge for up to 20 participants, or 'in person' training for over 20 people. Other equestrian organisations such as BHS or Pony Club also offer the same training.**

Zoom: We are able to offer face-to-face training via Zoom, which is a video conferencing platform. Although the training will be done online, it will count as face-to-face training, and is therefore different from the e-learning refresher. It is the same course content as the in person face-to-face presentation, but delivered slightly differently to condense the session to roughly **2.5** hours. It is also interactive so there is chance for the participants to ask questions and have discussions during the call. Each zoom session will be

restricted to a maximum of 20 participants, although an ideal number would be more like 12-15. Due to the capped numbers, this facility needs to be prioritised to Coaches, Trustees and Safeguarding Officers whose safeguarding certificates are due for renewal. Zoom training can be organised by group, county or region – to set up a course or for any other queries please contact lcartwright@rda.org.uk

As before, you may use the e-learning course as a refresher, if your last course was face to face and your previous training (3-year renewal) has not yet expired. If you have any queries regarding this, please contact Laura Cartwright to discuss your situation.

Venues

- **If you've not yet been able to return to your venue, check that the environment is as tidy, safe and as clean as possible.**
- If groups are based at a centre that is BHS/ABRS/Pony Club or other BEF member body, it is best to check their requirements on preparing of venues for re-opening.
- Hand washing facilities **with soap** and/or sanitisers should be available on site at all times, as is best general practice. Soap and warm water is always preferable. **It's good practice to wash or sanitise hands on arrival and departure**, and between riders **where possible**, if volunteers are supporting more than one.

Participants

- Groups will need to establish who is able to take part – this will mean contacting participants, their carers or the schools and care homes to understand their current situation and ability and timescales to return.

First Aid

First Aid certificates must be in date and in line with the requirements of the RDA First Aid Policy. Online refresher courses are available to keep knowledge up to date, but do not in themselves constitute qualification or renewal. Groups must ensure that adequate first aider provision is in place, before any activities or sessions may take place.

First Aiders

There is a need for a first aider to be present for sessions to run. It is important for groups to check that their trained first aider(s) are able and willing to attend. RDA has a great safety record, but if a group starts sessions they need to recognise there is always a level of risk that can lead to accidents for participants and volunteers.

St John's provides the following guidance for first aiders:

- When approaching a casualty there is always a risk of cross contamination – especially when you may have to get close to the casualty to assess what is wrong or to check their breathing. It is always important to be aware of the risks of how this cross contamination has occurred.

- In line with government advice, make sure you wash your hands or use an alcohol gel, before and after treating a casualty also ensure that you don't cough or sneeze over a casualty when you are treating them.
 - The Resuscitation Council (UK) provides some useful advice of how to keep safe when providing CPR. <https://www.sja.org.uk/get-advice/first-aid-advice/unresponsive-casualty/how-to-do-cpr-on-an-adult/>
 - Don't lose sight of other cross contamination that could occur that isn't related to COVID-19:
 - Wear gloves or cover hands when dealing with open wounds
 - Cover cuts and grazes on your hands with waterproof dressing
 - Dispose of all waste safely
 - Do not touch a wound with your bare hand
 - Do not touch any part of a dressing that will come in contact with a wound.
 - The vast majority of incidents do not involve you getting close to a casualty where you would come into contact with cough droplets. Sensible precautions will ensure you are able to treat a casualty effectively.
 - It's recommended that you regularly review the www.nhs.uk or gov.uk websites, for any current guidance.
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Please remember that the RDA UK team is here to help you - whether it's your County, Regional or the RDA National team.

Don't hesitate to call or email with any questions, feedback or requests for help.

- [Road to Restart – MyRDA website](#)
- RDA UK Group Support Team: groupsupport@rda.org.uk / 01926 492915