

Equine Guide for New Groups

When starting your RDA group there are many things that you need to consider in terms of horsepower, both acquiring the right kind of equine and managing their welfare. This guide aims to keep you informed of both RDA Policies and the resources that we have available to assist you.

Finding a suitable equine

This can sometimes be the biggest challenge for groups. We are regularly contacted with offers of Equines that are 'the ideal RDA horse or pony' when actually what is ideal for one group may not be for the next. We are trying to move away from the stereotypical view that RDA Equines are elderly and somewhat static, our horses and ponies need to be fit, healthy and athletic to cope with the lifestyle in an RDA group. They can range from smaller, forward going ponies to weight carrying cobs and can take part in a range of disciplines from Riding to Carriage Driving, Vaulting to Show Jumping and Endurance.

Recommendations and word of mouth is the ideal way of sourcing your new equine although we recognise that this isn't always possible. Each RDA region has a Regional Equine Advisor and a Regional Vet who are on hand to answer any queries that you may have or they may know of something suitable available in your area. Their contact details can be found on the Myrda website. We have two sets of policies surrounding acquiring an equine, one is the Gift and Loan Pack and the other is a Pre-Purchase Examination (PPE) Policy. The Gift and Loan pack is great resource containing sample forms to help you cover every kind of scenario for how you may acquire your equine. It also highlights the need for having everything put into writing in terms of welfare, equine care and financial responsibility. We recommend that groups contact owners of loaned horses once a month with an update on their progress. This could be done via email or phone.

Our PPE policy states that all equines purchased must be subject to at least a two stage vetting to make sure they are healthy and fit for purpose. Group Trustees are responsible for exercising due diligence when spending charitable funds and the purchase of equines is quite often a larger financial commitment and hopefully a long-term investment. Failing to ensure that any equine bought is suitable could involve a considerable financial and practical burden on a group in both vet bills, on-going care and lack of an equine to use in RDA sessions. All equines that are purchased by an RDA group should have by law, a passport (which must be updated with transfer of ownership) and a microchip.

All RDA Equine policies can be found here <https://www.myrda.org.uk/runningyourgroup/policies>

Matching your Equines to your Participants

A match made in heaven for your equines and participants can be dependent on a few different factors. You will need to assess the type of disability that your participants have, along with any riding ability, confidence and their weight. Weighing your participants can be a sensitive subject but if you make it part of a regular monthly routine then it becomes part of normal life. Equines will also need to be weighed to enable you to have the correct information to enter into the RDA weight chart. Many feed companies are happy to bring a weighbridge to your yard free of charge and they will weigh your equines, body condition score them and give you feed advice (and quite often vouchers!!) it may be best to contact the brand of feed that you use to make the most of this visit.

On our RDA Group Orders website you can order equine weight charts that can be regularly updated <http://grouporders.rda.org.uk/>

You can find information on weight and the RDA weight chart here <https://www.myrda.org.uk/runningyourgroup/horses-and-rda/health-welfare/>

Free Vaccine Scheme

All horses owned or long term loaned must be vaccinated on annual basis in accordance with the RDA Equine Flu Vaccine Policy. For a number of years, pharmaceutical companies have supplied free vaccines for RDA Equines 'who contribute a significant amount of their time doing RDA activities'. This can include equines who aren't owned/loaned by RDA but do come under this criteria. Please be aware, it covers the cost of the vaccine only and not the cost of travel services or call out.

Information on vaccinations can be found here <https://www.myrda.org.uk/runningyourgroup/horses-and-rda/vaccinations/>

Targeted Worming Programme

We encourage all RDA groups to use a targeted worming programme where possible to help prevent equines becoming resistant to wormers. We have two companies who support RDA and are on hand to give you as much advice as you need. Please also discuss this with your Regional Vet if you feel you need a bit more guidance. The worming companies who support RDA are:

<https://www.westgatelabs.co.uk/>
<http://www.intelligentworming.co.uk/>

Tack and Equipment

A guide to tack and equipment that is suitable for use within RDA can be found in our rulebook. This is updated on an annual basis. Any special equipment that needs modifying for disability purposes comes under the guidance of Sue Mack. She is happy to answer any queries that you may have.

The rulebook can be found here: <https://www.myrda.org.uk/runningyourgroup/national-championships/>

Information on special equipment and Sue's contact details can be found here: <https://www.myrda.org.uk/runningyourgroup/special-equipment/>

Additional equine policies that we have in place are:

- Annual Health Check
- Equine Welfare Policy
- RDA Medication Policy
- End of Service Policy

These can all be found on the Policies page <https://www.myrda.org.uk/runningyourgroup/policies/>

Contact Information

Alongside your Regional Equine Advisors and Regional Vets, as a point of contact for equine issues we have:

Emma Bayliss, Equine Coordinator, National Office ebayliss@rda.org.uk 01926 405972

Doug Smith, Equine National Lead, riwm2@hotmail.com

Nick Hart, Honorary RDA Vet, nhart@rvc.ac.uk