

Equine Welfare code of practice

Introduction

Our horses and ponies are the lifeblood of the RDA family. Demand for our services has never been greater, and having enough of the right sort of equine to support the varied needs of our participants is critical to achieving our charitable objectives. The health and wellbeing of all our equines is vital to the delivery of a positive experience for all our participants and volunteers. See more in the links below

[Code of Conduct Welfare Horse 1Jan2013.pdf \(fei.org\)](#)

www.worldhorsewelfare.org [The-5-domains-of-animal-welfare](#)

Due to the unique nature of RDA activities, this code of practice further outlines our commitment to equine welfare. This should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- [Pre-purchase Examination guidelines](#)
- [Annual Health Check guidelines](#)
- [Vaccine code of practice guidelines](#)
- [Equine Gift and Loan guidelines](#)
- [Riding School guidelines](#)
- [Quality of Life guidelines](#)

Background

This should be adopted to safeguard the health and welfare of all our equines. RDA resources on the selection, training, welfare, and use of horses in RDA are for guidance in setting professional standards and highlighting vital points - they are not intended to take the place of professional advice.

Main Guiding Principles

- Equines **should not** be used for any RDA activity until they have been fully assessed by the Regional Coach, Carriage Driving Assessor or someone deemed appropriate and has the necessary qualifications and experience to complete this assessment. Equines should be sound, in appropriate body condition and should not display any signs of stress during their introduction to RDA work. Veterinary or professional advice must be sought where there is any doubt.
- Equines must be a minimum of 5 years old.
- There is no maximum age limit for RDA equines however, the horses' fitness, body condition, age, height and the presence of any medical or orthopaedic conditions must be taken into consideration when allocating work and carrying weights to older horses.
- Stallions must not be used under any circumstances.
- All equines owned by or under a long-term loan agreement with RDA are to have a minimum of a two stage pre purchase examination.

- Any equines, donkeys, mules (owned, long term loan, commercial, privately owned) should have an annual health check to ensure fit for purpose.
- All tack/harness and special equipment should be inspected on a regular basis to ensure that it is being maintained in good condition and that it fits the equine on which it is used. Group Coaches/Carriage Driving Coaches or designated person to check the condition and fit before every RDA session.
- RDA equine/rider combination guidance is available and must be followed. Combinations must reflect the horse's body condition, height, age, fitness levels and the presence of any known medical or orthopaedic conditions. Rider values should be modified according to their ability, balance, and stability. During RDA activities rider/equine combination limits must be continually monitored. See [horse and rider combinations](#) on MyRDA
- Any detrimental use of equipment or inappropriate equine/rider combination will be reported to the Regional Equine Advisor or Regional Coach. This may result in removal of the equipment or equine.
- The RDA has a zero-blood policy. Should blood be seen anywhere on a horse, the animal must be removed from work or competition and veterinary advice sought immediately.

Pre-Purchase Examination Guidelines



Introduction

Equines play a vital role within RDA and purchasing suitable horsepower for an RDA Group can be daunting from a financial and practical point of view.

Background

It is recognised that equines are the base upon which everything we do is built. We must strive to ensure that we have the soundest base possible, and to this end it is expected that every equine owned or loaned to an RDA Group has a Pre-Purchase Examination (PPE) to ensure it is 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.

If the equine bought is not 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.

These guidelines should be used to help safeguard charity funds and assist RDA Groups in finding a suitable equine.

Guiding Principles:

- RDA expects that all horses that are owned or long-term loaned to RDA Groups should have the minimum of a two stage pre-purchase examination

Annual Health Check Guidelines

Introduction

RDA is a voluntary organisation and acknowledges that volunteers are vital to its current and future success. Equines, donkeys, mules play a vital role in RDA and must be always handled with awareness and consideration. The health and wellbeing of all our equines is vital to the delivery of a positive experience to all our participants.

Background

Veterinary checks are imperative to ensure that all equines, donkeys, mules used by RDA groups are healthy during their time and to ensure that any health issue can be dealt with proactively. This will ensure the RDA provide the highest possible standard of service to our participants and will reassure people who loan/donate equines, donkeys, mules that we take the welfare seriously. However, equines who receive annual Riding School Licence checks are exempt from this, as this makes up part of the annual check.

Guiding Principles:

1. The health, welfare and wellbeing of any equine, donkeys, mules owned/long-term loaned by an RDA group supersedes any demands of volunteers, coaches or participants.
2. Each RDA Group who owns, or has an equine, donkey or mule on a long term loan agreement, shall keep a record, which includes annual checks and any other reports from the Vet.
3. The minimum requirement for an annual check is the equivalent of a Stage 2 vetting with the addition of the horse being walked and trotted on a firm, flat surface to check that the equine shows regularity, suppleness and shows no sign of pain when moving.
4. The Annual Health Check Policy is accompanied by an Annual Health Check Form which can be used by the Vet during the examination.
5. The group **must** follow guidance from the Veterinary surgeon or professional to provide the best care for their equines, even if this means taking them out of work on a temporary or permanent basis.

Annual Health Check Form

Name:	Group Name and date:		
Microchip Present Yes/No (law) Microchip Number:	Age:	Height:	Mare / Gelding

Identified from Passport? Yes/No	Weight: kgs	Current carrying weight (inc tack): St/Kg
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Examination *mandatory requirement as per Annual Health Check Policy

Body Condition Score: 0 1 2 3 4 5

	Checked as normal	✓	Notes
General Condition*			
Temperature*			
Heart*			
Lungs*			
Eyes*			
Skin/Coat* Visual assessment			
Movement* Walk/Trot on flat firm surface in hand			
Worming/Targeted Worm count Discuss any worming treatment if not already in place	Circle as appropriate		Targeted/Routine dosing Assessed/treated for: Tapeworm/Redworm/Round worms/Other Next worming event due:
Foot care	Circle as appropriate		Shod/Unshod Last seen by farrier: Next due:
Teeth	Circle as appropriate		Last dental examination: Seen by: Vet/BAEDT Next due:
Vaccinations Discuss RDA Free Vaccine Scheme	Flu/Tet vaccinations meets RDA requirements: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Any other concerns?
Does the carrying weight of the equine need to be adjusted for a medical reason?			

<u>Is the equine fit for work?</u> Yes/No/Reassessment needed Date of next health check:	Vet Stamp:
	Vet Signature:

Vaccination Guidelines



There are many outbreaks of Equine Influenza (EI) there has been a lot of discussion across the British Equestrian Federation (BEF) about the most appropriate response to protect horses. An outbreak of Equine Flu is a serious issue of equine welfare and would have a large impact on the day to day running of RDA groups, as well as equestrian businesses and the industry as a whole.

RDA UK will require any horse that is owned by RDA, or that is deemed to qualify for the free vaccine scheme, to be vaccinated annually. Where possible, we are recommending that horses should be vaccinated every 6 months. It is also recommended that any other horse used by RDA should be vaccinated. This will ensure that we stay in line with both BE (British Equestrian) and the FEI rules, this is also a preventative to reduce the incidence and occurrence of EI.

By vaccinating horses every 6 months we are in compliance with competition venues or outside venues for RDA activities.

Free Vaccination Scheme for RDA

For a number of years, three pharmaceutical companies have generously supplied free vaccines for RDA horses and ponies: Zoetis, MSD Animal Health and Boehringer Ingelheim. RDA horses and ponies qualify for the scheme if they 'contribute a significant amount of their time to doing RDA activities'. Please be aware, it covers the cost of the vaccine only and not the cost of any call out charges made by a vet.

Claiming a free vaccine is easy: just fill out the form on the MyRDA website in Equines in RDA, Vaccinations. The form can be signed by a Trustee of the group and the Vet who administered the vaccines. The group should keep the original and then send a copy to the relevant participating pharmaceutical company. This will depend on the type of vaccine administered, your Vet will advise if you aren't sure. The Veterinary practice will then be reimbursed with vaccine replacement usually on a quarterly basis.

If you have any queries regarding vaccinations, please do not hesitate to get in touch with RDA National Office: 01926 492915 / groupsupport@rda.org.uk

Gift & Loan Guidelines

It is essential, whenever an RDA Group takes on an equine as a gift or loan, that the group has a written agreement to avoid possible problems in the future. Experience has shown that having the terms of a loan/gift set out from the start can help the group to manage situations more easily and protect themselves from possible issues including provisions for a change in circumstances. The agreement must be carefully drawn up to suit each individual case and must be signed and dated by both parties.

RDA strongly recommends that groups have an **equine on trial** before agreeing to have them on loan or taking them on as a gift. Before final acceptance of an equine, we expect a Pre-Purchase Examination by a Vet to ensure that it is physically capable of doing the work required. As required by law we expect ALL equines to be microchipped and have an up-to-date passport.

Below we have outlined what should be included in an agreement between a group and an owner. There are also draft agreements that groups can edit and change to suit the terms that they would like to agree. For an equine leaving RDA we have a transfer of ownership form which can be found on Equine page of Myrda.

Trial

As a safeguard against misunderstanding and recriminations, the following points should be agreed in writing before the equine goes on trial:

- a) Length of trial – particularly if the equine turns out to be unsuitable
- b) Details of insurance cover
- c) Responsibility for Veterinary expenses
- d) A clause covering possible euthanasia

If the equine is unsuitable, it should be returned at the group's expense.

Loan

As well as who is responsible for veterinary treatment and details of insurance, the agreement should include:

- a) The duration of the loan (indefinite or a stated time)
- b) Where the equine may be kept
- c) By whom it may be used
- d) Action to be taken should the equine become redundant for any reason including ill health, retirement or the group have to close on temporary or permanent basis
- e) Details of insurance cover

Gifts

A written agreement in the case of direct gifts is similar to that for an equine on loan but without the return element. It should be clear:

- a) Whether the owner wishes to give the equine completely to the group and does NOT want to have it offered back (completion of the slip at the foot of the Agreement Form will confirm this) and whether any updates or contact is requested
- b) What action should be taken if the group circumstances change, or the equine becomes disused
- c) Details of Insurance cover

Sample letters and draft forms (please adapt to suit your individual needs)

Below are letters and forms that can be used for the basis of an agreement between a group and an owner of an equine being loaned or gifted to RDA. They are to be used as a starting point and adapted to meet the individual circumstances; groups must get legal advice as needed.

1. **LETTER TO OWNERS OF EQUINES OFFERED** - This letter to be sent to owners of equines offered after initial contact.
2. **AGREEMENT FORM EQUINE OFFERED ON TRIAL TO A GROUP** - This form **must** be completed by all concerned before an equine is accepted as a trial by a group
3. **AGREEMENT FORM EQUINE OFFERED AS A GIFT TO A GROUP** - This form **must** be completed by all concerned before an equine is accepted as a gift by a group.
4. **AGREEMENT FORM EQUINE OFFERED ON LOAN TO A GROUP** - This form **must** be completed by all concerned before an equine is accepted on loan by a group.
5. **DRAFT AGREEMENT FOR WORKING LIVERY** - For the use in groups with equines on working livery with riding schools.
6. **DRAFT AGREEMENT FOR SESSION LOANS** – for use in groups with equine being offered per session

If any group would like support with any aspects of purchasing, loaning or owning equines, please contact the Regional Equine Adviser for your Region. Offers of driving ponies should be passed to your Regional Carriage Driving Representative.

LETTER TO OWNERS OF EQUINES OFFERED TO AN RDA GROUP AS GIFT/LOAN OR SALE

Address of RDA Group:

Dear

Thank you very much for offering your (equine / donkey / mule)* for the use of our participants.

I am sure you will understand that because of the specialised nature of our work, we need to be careful when accepting animals. As they need to be suitable for the particular activities required. The animals may need to be assessed for their suitability over a trial period. In such a case the equine will be accepted for a trial period by mutual agreement.

RDA UK require a Pre-Purchase Examination before taking on a new equine, we will agree a mutually convenient time for this to take place. As required by law we expect **all** equines to be microchipped and have an up to date passport.

Whatever the outcome, we very much appreciate you offering your equine to RDA and as soon as I receive the completed form I will follow it up and then contact you again.

Meanwhile, if you have any queries or want more information, please let me know and thank you once more for thinking of helping our group.

Yours sincerely,

Group Chair

*delete as appropriate

**AGREEMENT FORM
EQUINE/DONKEY/MULE OFFERED ON TRIAL TO A GROUP**



Please note: Stallions will not be accepted in RDA

Name:	
Age:	Height: Mare/Gelding:
Colour:	Breed/Type:
ID Details (eg Freeze/Brand, Passport No, Microchip No):	

Owned by:			
Address:		Postcode	
Email:			
	Telephone:		
Has been offered on trial to: (RDA Group)			
Address:		Postcode	
		Telephone:	

Subject to the following conditions:

1. After a trial period of up to **insert weeks / months** and a veterinary examination, the equine will be accepted by the group or returned to the owner at the groups expense.
2. Overall charge of the equine will be the responsibility of the group including veterinary fees and Public Liability cover, whilst the equine is on trial. Whilst every reasonable care will be taken, the insurance for loss of use or death of the equine remains the responsibility of the owner.
3. The group will have the responsibility to see that the equine is euthanised without delay should a Vet consider it necessary for humane reasons, after making every reasonable effort to consult the owner.
4. The owner reserves the right to visit the equine, with reasonable notice given to the group.

If the Group find it necessary to change the current arrangements they will give as much notice as possible.

Signed: (Group Chair)

Date:

Signed:(Owner)

Date:

**AGREEMENT FORM
EQUINE/DONKEY/MULE OFFERED AS A GIFT TO A GROUP**



Name:	
Age:	Height: Mare/Gelding:
Colour:	Breed/Type:
ID Details (eg Freeze/Brand, Passport No, Microchip No):	

Owned by:			
Address			
		Postcode	
	Telephone:		
Email:			
Has been offered as a Gift to: (RDA Group)			
Address:			
		Postcode:	
	Telephone:		

Subject to the following conditions:

1. Ownership of the equine will be transferred to the group. The equine passport must be exchanged and new ownership details registered with the correct passport issuing authority.
2. The equine will be subject to a Pre Purchase Examination at the expense of the group.
3. After a trial period, under agreed terms, the equine will either be accepted or returned to the owner listed above at the group's expense.
4. Should the Vet consider it necessary, the group will have the right and responsibility to see that the equine is euthanised humanely, without delay.
5. Overall charge of the equine will be the responsibility of the group
6. If for any reason the group find it necessary to change the current arrangements for the equine, they will first offer it back to the owner (unless the owner has indicated in writing that they wish to hand over the equine completely to the RDA and do not want it back) secondly make every effort to find it another suitable home **or** thirdly have it humanely euthanised.

NOTE: There must be clear understanding as to where the equine will be kept and by whom it may be used, who is responsible for veterinary expenses and any insurance requirements. It must also be agreed what action should be taken should the equine become redundant for any reason or the group has to temporarily or permanently close.

Signed:(Group Chair)

Date:

Signed: (Owner)

Date:

IN ADDITION: (Delete if not required) I am making a gift of the equine (as stated above) to the RDA Group (as stated above). I am prepared to leave future arrangements for the equine in the hands of the group and do not wish to have it offered back to me.

Signed: (Owner)

Date:

**AGREEMENT FORM
EQUINE/DONKEY/MULE OFFERED ON LOAN TO A GROUP**



Name of Horse:	
Age:	Height: Mare/Gelding:
Colour:	Breed/Type:
ID Details (eg Freeze/Brand, Passport No, Microchip No):	

Owned by:			
Address			
		Postcode	
	Telephone:		
Email:			
Has been offered on loan to: (RDA Group)			
Address:			
		Postcode:	
	Telephone:		

Subject to the following conditions:

1. The equine will be subject to a Pre-Purchase Examination at the expense of the group.
2. After a trial period, under agreed terms, the equine will either be accepted or returned at the group's expense.
3. Should a Vet consider it necessary the group will have the right and responsibility to see that the equine is euthanised humanely without delay.
4. Overall care of the equine will be the responsibility of the group.
5. If for any reason the group find it necessary to change the current arrangements for the equine, their representative will discuss alternative arrangements with the owner, and if none can be arranged, will return the equine to the owner.

NOTE: When loans are arranged, there must be a clear understanding confirmed in writing as to where the equine will be kept and by whom it may be used, who is responsible for veterinary attention and any insurance requirements and action to be taken, including possible euthanasia should the equine become redundant for any reason or should the group need to close on a temporary or permanent basis.

Signed:(Group Chair)

Date:

Signed:(Owner)

Date:

**DRAFT AGREEMENT
FOR WORKING LIVERY/RIDING SCHOOL**



THIS AGREEMENT is made on the **(DATE)** between **(NAME OF STABLES OR RIDING SCHOOL)** (hereinafter called the "Company") of the one part and the **(RDA GROUP)** (hereinafter referred to as the Group) of the other part. **IT IS AGREED** as follows:

1. The equine
is the property of the Group. The equine will be stabled (free of charge) at the Company's premises to be used by participants in the RDA group. The equine may be used at any RDA event outside the Company's premises. If the equine is needed for an RDA event not under the control of the Group, the Group Chairman of the RDA will make every effort to give at least one week's notice to the Company.
2. RDA insurance covers Third Party and Public Liability during the period the equine is in use by the Group and for events organised by other RDA Groups subject to the terms and conditions of the RDA's master policy in force.

NB: At all other times the Company's own insurance must be responsible for any injury or accident caused by the equine and the Company hereby agrees to carry sufficient and appropriate insurance cover and will provide a copy of such policy to the Group and the receipt for the last premium on written request.

3. The Company will be responsible for the feeding and day to day health and welfare of the equine, which will be made available for inspection by the Group's Vet at any given time by appointment. The Company will abide by any instructions given by the Group with regard to the welfare and care of the equine including feeding and/or provide for the euthanasia of the equine if necessary, under supervision of the Group.
4. Shoeing or trimming the equine's feet will be the responsibility of the Company. Veterinary fees will be the responsibility of the **(GROUP/COMPANY)**.
5. Any tack accompanying the equine will be the property of the Group and may be used by the Company, who will be responsible for good condition and repair.
6. When not required by the Group, the equine will be available for use by the Company for their own pupils at **(ADDRESS OF STABLES/RIDING SCHOOL)** provided that the Company will ensure that the equine has one rest day a week on which it is not ridden and one holiday each year.
7. The Company will arrange for the equine to be euthanised at the expense of the **(GROUP/COMPANY)** should the Group so request. The Company shall have the right to euthanise the equine should a Vet consider it necessary for humane reasons.
8. This Agreement may be terminated by either party giving one months' notice in writing to the other.

SIGNED:
RDA Group Chair

SIGNED:
for and on behalf of **(THE COMPANY)**

AGREEMENT FORM
EQUINE OFFERED ON SESSION LOAN TO A GROUP



(session loan refers to an equine loaned to a group per session by a private owner)

Name of Horse:	
Age:	Height: Mare/Gelding:
Colour:	Breed/Type:
ID Details (eg Freeze/Brand, Passport No, Microchip No):	

Owned by:			
Address			Postcode
		Telephone:	
Email:			
Has been offered on session loan: (RDA Group)			
Address:			Postcode:
		Telephone:	

Dates Last:	Shod or Trimmed	Wormed or Faecal Egg Count
Vaccinated:	Equine Flu	Tetanus
	Teeth checked	Physio/Chiro

IS YOUR EQUINE? Please feel free to give further details on a separate sheet

Safe and sensible to handle?	YES	NO
Safe and sensible to ride?	YES	NO
Easy to catch in a field?	YES	NO
Safe and sensible to mount/dismount?	YES	NO
Confident in traffic & unusual circumstances?	YES	NO
Has the equine ever been used for carriage driving?	YES	NO

Should the equine become ill/lame during an RDA session, who has responsibility for Vet fees?

Should the equine need ongoing care/medical attention resulting from an incident during an RDA session who is responsible for this? Please note this can include time as well as financial consideration.

Any further considerations for both parties to agree? This could be travel arrangements, days/times available/tack usage, Vet preference, notice period etc.

Subject to the following conditions:

1. The equine will be subject to an assessment by a suitably qualified RDA Coach
2. It is the RDA groups responsibility to adhere to all relevant legislation surrounding hire of horses.
3. Should a Vet consider it necessary the group will have the right and responsibility to see that the equine is euthanised humanely without delay.
4. If for any reason the group find it necessary to change the current arrangements for the equine, their representative will discuss arrangements with the owner.

Signed: (Group Chair)

Date

Signed:(Owner)

Date:

Riding School Guidelines



Introduction

If you want to run a business in the UK hiring out equines that makes more than £1000 per annum, you will need to have a Riding Establishment License to comply with The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) Regulations 2018.

In England, Scotland and Wales licences are granted by your local authority. Your premises will be inspected by a local authority officer and your equines will be assessed by a local authority appointed Vet. In Northern Ireland, you will need to contact your Divisional Veterinary Office.

Guiding Principles

- RDA expects that all groups take the correct steps to find out whether they need to apply for a licence
- RDA expects that all groups who fall under these restrictions endeavour to obtain their license and renew as and when necessary
- RDA Groups who obtain a Riding School License do not need to have a separate Annual Health Check for their equines in keeping with RDA Policy
- Advice on this matter and any further information is readily available. Please email groupsupport@rda.org.uk or see the [riding school](#) section on MyRDA

Quality of Life (QoL) Guidelines

Reason for QoL Guidelines

The equines, which are the basis of everything we do, serve us quietly and obediently to the best of their ability for many years. It is our duty to ensure that when they can no longer do this, for whatever reason, we take appropriate steps for their future.

In addition, RDA is not an equine welfare charity, therefore charitable funds should not be unduly used to fund the costs of care and/or treatment for an equine, donkey or mule that is no longer being ridden, driven or taking part in RDA groundwork activities.

Criteria:

1. All decisions shall be made purely with the welfare of the equine in mind.
2. A vet must be consulted before any decision is made.
3. If the vet advises that the most humane route for the equine is euthanasia, that advice should be followed.
4. Consider whether the equine, donkey or mule can have another purpose, i.e. ground work activities rather than ridden.
5. If the vet considers the equine can be retired with no detriment (either physical or mental), the group may take steps to find a suitable situation for it. Ensure the offer is made to the owner if the equine is loaned, offer to another RDA group or riding school. Contact the local Redwings charity or Blue cross.
6. If no suitable situation for the equine can be found the group may also consider euthanasia
7. No RDA funds may be used to pay for the upkeep of the equine once it has been retired.