



Preparing for Hot Weather at The National Championships

Updated July 8th 2025 – updates highlighted in red

Whilst weather conditions are variable across the UK, it is looking likely to be hot at Hartpury for the RDA National Championships. RDA UK are monitoring the Met Office forecast on a regular basis and liaising with our Volunteer Vets to provide advance advice and guidance for all Groups attending.

RDA UK will also monitor conditions throughout the Championships weekend and make adjustments to the competition as required to ensure the welfare of our equines, participants and volunteers.

Groups getting ready for the Championships must prepare for hot weather in advance. It is the responsibility of each Group to assess local conditions, how well your equines are acclimatised to high temperatures, the suitability of your transport, and therefore whether it is safe to travel and compete. Groups must also bring sufficient equipment (i.e. extra water buckets etc) to support the welfare of your equines whilst at the event.

Equine Event Temperature Guidance

There isn't a single, universally defined temperature at which equine events are stopped. Instead, the decision to halt or modify events due to heat is based on a combination of factors, including the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) index, humidity, and how well-acclimatised the horses are to the conditions. We will be monitoring the WBGT throughout the event, and making adjustments to the competition as required to ensure the welfare of our equines.

Equine Welfare Guidance

Equine welfare is a paramount consideration for RDA, and with the current unusually high temperatures, it is essential that Groups plan and prepare in advance for this, especially as you prepare to travel to the Championships.

Feed & Water

- Please note these are suggestions and may not be appropriate for every equine.
- Plan ahead in terms of your horse's diet and consider adding salt/electrolytes if you don't already.

Riding for the Disabled Association Incorporating Carriage Driving

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- It is also worth considering adding soaked hay to keep them taking on enough water over the weekend.
- Check how much your horses usually drink, as many drink and eat less when they are away. You could try soaking some apples or carrots in water and then feed them moist.
- Please discuss any potential dietary changes with your own vet if you have any concerns
- Put an extra water buckets & a salt lick in their stable.

Travel

- Plan your journey and travel as early or as late as possible to avoid the hottest part of the day.
- Carry plenty of water with you to be prepared for a breakdown or unexpected traffic delays.
- Where safe to do so, open windows, vents to maximize air flow throughout.
- Allow sufficient time on arrival to cool your horse down before riding / warming up for competition.

Exercise / Competition

- Keep working them in the run up to the event, as they will start to adjust to higher temperatures throughout the week and then cope better with travelling and staying away.
- Know your horse's usual temperature so you know if they are starting to overheat and struggle in their classes - don't over work them and if your horses are lagging stop them before they become poorly.
- Minimise warm up times and take more breaks than usual.

Cooling Down

- Remove tack quickly after exercise / competition.
- **Sponge your horse down or pour continuous water all over the horse's body. Cooling is most effective the more of the horse's surface that is cooled.**

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- Repeat this process a few times to bring back your horse temperature to normal. You may need to repeat this for 5-10 minutes if your horse is hot. You can easily gauge a horse's temperature by its breathing. Horses that are blowing or panting are hot and require further cooling.
- Best practice is not to scrape off excess water; however, doing this will not cause the water temperature to rise.
- Ensure that water is available after competition and offer to your horse, as it doesn't increase the risk of colic.
- Walk your horse lightly while cooling to aid circulation and help cool down effectively.
- Use shaded areas / and stabling for your horse that will reduce aggravation from flies.

Identifying a hot horse

There are several reliable indicators that a horse is very hot:

- Excessive sweating – horse completely covered in sweat and/or sweat running.
- Horse feels very hot to touch.
- Ataxia (unsteadiness) – especially when stopping after exercise.
- Blowing very hard (deep and laboured breathing)
- Panting (fast and shallow breathing)
- Prominent blood vessels in the skin
- Horse may show little reaction to people or environment.
- Horse may appear distressed or show signs of discomfort.

We're looking forward to a great weekend with excellent support from the Volunteer Vets on site throughout, but please plan ahead for your horses and always put them first. Do come & speak to our Vets during the competition if you have any concerns at all.

People Guidance

High temperatures affect people too, and disabled people can be more vulnerable to heat related illness, so please share the following advice and guidance with your volunteers and participants.

- Come prepared – watch the weather and don't forget to pack sun cream, water and a hat, or umbrella, to shade your face
- Remember to wear your sunscreen or sunblock to avoid sunburn.

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- Drink plenty of water. There will be hydration stations available at several points across the site.
- The sun is hottest between 11am and 3pm, so spectators are encouraged to take shade if they are overheating
- **Competitors will not be required to wear jackets to compete for any discipline, but must wear either a short or long sleeve shirt**
- **Sleeveless shirts are not permitted.**
- Wear loose light-coloured clothes, where possible, that cover your arms and legs
- Watch for signs of heat exhaustion, including heavy sweating, nausea or faintness and approach our medics if you start to feel unwell. They will be on-site all weekend.

Dogs Guidance

We know many people bring their dogs to the Championships. In light of Please follow the following guidance.

- Plan ahead, and check the temperature in advance
- **For their safety and comfort, we strongly recommend that you leave your pet at home, or if unavoidable, bring plenty of water and pet safe sun cream**
- **Once on site, do not leave any dog in a car or lorry – dogs die in hot cars! We will remove any dogs we find left in cars.**
- Make sure your dog has access to shade and plenty of fresh water throughout the day.
- Familiarise yourself with the signs of heatstroke – read the [Dogs Trust Guidance](#)
- Take extra care with flat-faced, overweight, unwell or older dogs who are at increased risk of heatstroke.
- **The Fun Dog Show is cancelled.**

We'd like to wish everyone a safe journey, see you at the Champs!!

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