

ROAD TO RESTART



GUIDANCE NOTES

Introduction

We have all missed our time at RDA and many groups just can't wait to reopen. However, any return to activity needs careful planning.

Before 'opening for business' groups will need to ensure they have considered the safety of all involved.

The risks of COVID-19 still remain, so any activity will need to meet latest UK and devolved regulations. Even as restrictions are lifted, **we need to consider how comfortable people are with removing all the controls (face coverings and social distancing when announced by the respective governments) and also the risks that may be posed to our participants and volunteers.**

[On the MyRDA website and the new MyRDA YouTube channel, there are a number of videos produced by RDA UK volunteers and staff, which show the thought processes groups have gone through.](#) Groups will undoubtedly need to adapt how they work, so take time to consider what it would mean to yours.

There will be volunteers/staff and participants who are excited about getting back to RDA, but there will also be many others who are worried and scared about facing a changed environment and the risks that remain, and there will be some who want to return but who cannot for their own safety. Now may be the time to consider who can be involved – will you have any participants who can return and if so will the group 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 in the current situation; sanitisers, **and ensuring people's needs around distancing and face coverings are respected when these restrictions are lifted.** If based at a riding establishment the group will need to 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.

There is a lot to think about, take time to consider what is needed and do it in a way that suits your group and everyone involved. In everything we do we must consider **safety first** – Safety for volunteers and staff, safety for participants, and safety for equines. If in doubt – don't do it.

What do groups need to do?

It's important, when planning the right time for your group to restart, to consider your own circumstances. Groups should decide when it's safe and right for them to open. Some groups will want to get started as soon as possible - some will need time to prepare.

We recommend that even those groups that may not feel quite able to restart in the short-term should speak with the regional and county teams, to explore all options and consider what actions they may want

to take, or at least understand what will be needed, to facilitate a speedier return once the time is right for them.

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 measures have been taken to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 **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 **have COVID-19 elements within their risks assessment or have prepared a stand-alone COVID-19 risk assessment (template available)**; 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 to mitigate the risks of COVID-19, 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
- ✓ Information about sanitising products
- ✓ Example Resources and Posters
- ✓ A dedicated MyRDA YouTube account, with 'how to' videos aimed at showing each step of the process – including those from groups that have already returned to activity. **Please note that some of these may be out of date where protocols are discussed.**

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. There has only been one confirmed case of equine influenza in the UK in 2020. There does not appear to be much circulating influenza this year – probably in part to the 'herd immunity' brought about after the increase in vaccinations last year. 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 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 (they are not self-isolating) 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 already, 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 and to reduce risk you will keep that to the same small group of people. It's 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 **must be inducted and taken through the Consent Information prior to being involved in any RDA activities. There is no need for them to sign this document. It may be helpful to have this document prominently displayed so that volunteers are reminded of what they have agreed to every time 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, along with the **Consent Information Induction**.

- **Groups can take on new participants as it is possible to safely undertake the necessary pre-participation physical assessments with allowances that allow breaching of social distancing requirements, or in England now no requirement for social distancing**

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.

Where social distancing is required, 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 comply with sanitising and safety procedures.
3. **Ability to supporting participants by breaching social distancing using the dispensation in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland (there is no need for social distancing now in England, Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey).**
4. **Ability to have side walkers from 21 June 2021.**
5. **Care / thorough hygiene protocols should be taken if refreshments (tea/coffee and cakes) need to be served.**

Coaches due for a review will be contacted by either RDA National Office to be invited onto organised Continuing Professional Development training, or by their Regional Coach, in order to arrange a face to face review where this is required. We will prioritise coaches who are overdue their review from 2019/2020 first. If you are due a review in 2020 or 2021 then in most cases your review will be rolled over.

First Aid

First Aid certificates were extended by 6 months in 2020, if they expired after 16 March 2020. All requalification training should have been completed (or the appropriate training courses booked) by 31 March 2021. 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.

Safeguarding

RDA is offering a couple of options for renewals of Safeguarding Training. If you attended a face to face course last time, you can refresh using the e-learning, and this is valid for 3 years. If you undertook the e-learning last time, you MUST renew via face to face. We will restart in person face to face workshops once it is safe to do so in 2021, on demand.

End of E-Learning extensions to Safeguarding Certificates: To help with the renewal of safeguarding certificates, we allowed those needing face to face training to update via the e-learning for a second time although this was only valid for 1 year. This exemption came to an end on 31st March 2021. From April 1st all those needing face to face training will be expected to attend a face to face course either in person when allowed, 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 other equestrian organisations such as BHS or Pony Club offer the same training.

Zoom: We are now 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 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

Venues

- Venue hard surfaces (contact and access points) will need to be cleaned down before people start using sites. A list of suitable suppliers for products to help with required cleaning of surfaces, equipment and tack is available on the MyRDA website.
- 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.
- Tack that is frequently touched (e.g. reins) will need to be sanitised between uses, and at the end of the day. The Road to Restart page includes information about Aqueous, a product that can be used on leather at the end of each day to ensure the sanitisation doesn't ruin them.
- Communal areas will need to be cleaned daily when used e.g. toilets and waiting areas.
- Hand washing facilities and/or sanitisers need to be on site at all times. Soap and warm water is always preferable – but groups must make sure that either disposable towels are used or anyone visiting the venue brings their own towels and takes them home. Hand washing or sanitisation must happen on arrival and departure, and between riders 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.
- Where assistance is needed [where a breach of social distancing is required you can do this following the requirements of the disability dispensation set out on the Road to Restart page. This only applies to those countries that still have social distancing.](#)
- Any participant taking part in sessions [must be taken thought the information in the Consent Information document.](#)

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.
- As this is a new disease this is an ever changing situation and the government and NHS are continually updating their advice. Make sure that you regularly review the NHS 111 or Gov.uk website which has a specific section on Coronavirus.
- These are challenging and uncertain times for all. The COVID-19 outbreak has meant a lot of upheaval and worry for people [over the past year](#). In order to help others you will also need to look after your own needs. Make sure you take time to talk about your fears and concerns with someone you trust and to take out time to look after yourself.

There is a lot to consider, and for some there will be a lot to do in preparation for restarting. Please remember that the RDA UK team is here to help you - whether it's your County, Regional or the RDA National team. These are unprecedented times so we all need to support each other.

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
- [MyRDA YouTube](#) channel