



RDA CARRIAGE DRIVING GUIDELINES INCORPORATING SAFETY CODE

**PLEASE ALSO BE AWARE THAT THESE GUIDELINES SHOULD BE READ
IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE RDA HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY.**

(Updated August 2021)

**PLEASE BE AWARE IN YOUR OWN
ENVIRONMENT THAT HEALTH AND
SAFETY IS 99% COMMON SENSE AND
1% APPLICATION**

RDA CARRIAGE DRIVING SAFETY CODE



Accidents happen when rules are broken. You must comply at all times with the RDA Carriage Driving Safety Code as well as the RDA Health & Safety Policy.

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General Guidance

- **DISABLED DRIVERS MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A CD COACH IN THE CARRIAGE AT ALL TIMES.**
- **No disabled driver can be allowed to drive an unapproved equine or vehicle.**
- **Anyone on the carriage shall hold a green card for Carriage Driving (other than disabled driver)**
- **No volunteers or Trainee Carriage Driving Coaches can be in charge of a carriage until they are signed off as competent.**

Only turnouts that have been fully assessed and approved may be used (see Assessments below)

Every turnout should have a minimum of two volunteers available at all times. Depending on the size of the carriage a third helper may be required:

- The CD Coach
- A volunteer to hold the equine's head
- At least 1 volunteer to assist the drivers in mounting/dismounting from the vehicle.
- A fourth helper is necessary if the driver is a wheelchair user or needs additional assistance when mounting or dismounting.
- Only green carded volunteers of the group will be carried on the vehicle with disabled drivers or when exercising.
- If there is more than one turnout, the Carriage Driving Organiser (or an appointed person, preferably a CD Coach) will be in charge; watching the equines, drivers and volunteers whilst preparing to drive.
- Unless the helper is leading or head holding the equine, lead ropes must be removed before driving commences. Ropes must not be tied round the equine's neck.

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- Bicycles should be fitted with a suitable stand. An unattended bicycle should not be parked in close proximity to an equine.
- Dogs must not be carried on, nor be in close proximity to, any turnout at an RDA session. This includes assistance dogs.
- If you are considering driving outside of your usual group environment, please consult your Regional Driving Rep to ensure that you are sufficiently covered by insurance to do so.

Any accidents during RDA driving session must be reported to your Regional Driving Rep to ensure you receive adequate support.

Assessments

- All RDA CD Groups must have their CD Coaches, vehicles; harness, and equines assessed by an assessor. New groups and new venues require 2 assessors.
- Groups ready for assessment must contact their Regional Carriage Driving Representative who will make the necessary arrangements for the assessment.

What to expect at an assessment:

Two Carriage Driving Assessors, with the Regional Carriage Driving Representative, will visit a new Group when it is ready for its initial assessment. For following assessments only one assessor is necessary, except for a new venue.

What will the assessment entail?

The Carriage Driving Assessor/s will drive the equines.

The Carriage Driving Assessor/s will then take note of the following:-

- Conditions, cleanliness and suitability of equines, vehicles and harness.
- Equines' handling ability and obedience.
- The Organiser's calmness and efficiency in controlling numbers of people and equines, and the Group's ability to cope with the unexpected.
- Correct balancing of vehicle if 2 wheeled, and securing of wheelchairs.
- Correct harnessing up.
- The ability of the CD Coaches.

Other assessments (e.g. of vehicles and harness) will follow the same pattern but suited to the occasion.

It is stressed that Organisers should not request Assessments unless they have a reasonable certainty that the equine, coach, vehicle or harness etc. will be approved.

If in doubt, please consult your Regional Carriage Driving Representative.

Carriage Driving on Public Roads & Pleasure Driving

Our Insurers have agreed that our carriage drivers will be covered by the public liability insurance cover while driving on public roads provided that they comply strictly with the following safety measures.

- Leaders and followers in motor cars or on bicycles **must** wear fluorescent caution jackets /tabards. Driving on busy roads must be discouraged.
- If there is more than one vehicle in a drive the Carriage Driving Organiser or a delegated person must be in charge, watching the equines, drivers and volunteers at all times.

Pleasure Driving/Carriage rides can take place providing that RDA rules are applied to at all times. All equipment and equines must have been passed by an Assessor and the vehicle driven by an approved CD Coach.

Only one disabled driver is allowed in a vehicle at any one time, except when taking part in a pleasure drive where two ambulant participants, accompanied by carers, may be taken. This would be dependent on the equine being strong and fit enough to take the additional weight and the terrain being suitable.

Hats

It is a **mandatory requirement** for both drivers and CD Coaches to wear protective headgear of the standard currently approved by RDA. Protective headgear is highly recommended for all volunteers and cyclists.

The only exception to this ruling is when the disabled driver has a relevant signed certificate from their doctor or physiotherapist. This exception may operate unless any changes are introduced by statutory regulation, and as an extension to the present provisions of the Protective Headgear for Young Riders Act 1990, or any alternative legislation.

CD Coaches and Volunteers

The CD Coach is responsible for whole turnout including: - the equine, harness, vehicle, and the disabled carriage driver. He/she shall ensure that the turnout has adequate volunteers and that they are properly trained.

CD Coaches must:

- Thoroughly check the complete turnout before mounting including the harnessing up and putting to.
- Be seated in the vehicle, and controlling the equine before the disabled driver gets in. The CD Coach is in charge of the turnout and will only release the volunteer holding the equine's head when he/she is satisfied that all is in order before moving off.
- Ensure that driving is kept to a suitable speed, avoid sharp turns and keep distance between vehicles. **Cantering is not permitted under any circumstances.**
- Watch out for signs of mental or physical fatigue in the driver and be prepared to bring the drive to an early finish if necessary.
- Remain in the vehicle until the disabled person gets out.
- Be able to cope with any emergency.
- Ensure that there are enough volunteers to escort the turnouts on foot, bike or in a car.

Equines

Please adhere to the **RDA Equine Welfare Policy** as well as taking into account the additional Carriage Driving safety points listed below:

- Any equine that is in training will not be used with participants until they have been assessed as suitable.
- Any new equines that are in training will be registered with the RDA UK Carriage Driving Lead by filling in the 'Equine in Training in a Group' form.
- It is advised that with every new equine the length of the Trial/Training period be discussed with your Regional Driving Representative.
- The equine will have the right temperament and be thoroughly reliable and obedient under all conditions.
- The equine will stand still when asked, for harnessing up, putting to, loading and unloading wheelchairs.
- The equine must be responsive to aids and have good driving manners.
- The equine must be regularly driven by a competent CD coach in company and alone. It must have no objection to being overtaken from the rear or having a turnout in front of it.
- There is no substitute for work, so riding can also be included in its exercise.
- **Any equine which has "bolted" at any time can never be used in RDA.**

Driving Weights

- A driving equine should not normally be asked to pull more than its own weight, except on firm going on flat surfaces or non-hilly terrain when half the equine's weight may be added to the weight to be pulled.
- To calculate the total weight to be pulled, the weight of the driver, CD Coach and wheelchair must be added to that of the vehicle.
- The equine may be weighed at a public weigh-bridge or a weight tape used.
- The weight of the carriage unladen may be obtained from the manufacturer.

Note: Some equines may pull more depending on their fitness.

A chart on Carriage Driving Weights and Welfare is available via the Group Orders form or via the Group Orders website: <http://grouporders.rda.org.uk/> and should be displayed.

Harness

A good quality harness is essential. It must be suitable, fit correctly and be cleaned on a regular basis. The stitching and buckles should be checked frequently. All sets of harness must be inspected by a Carriage Driving Assessor and approved before use.

The harness may be made of leather, webbing or other synthetic materials. However, pure nylon harnesses are not suitable to be used as they cause friction.

- **The Bridle:** Must be a snug fit, fitted with rosettes, and properly adjusted so that the blinkers and bit are in the correct positions.
- **Full Collar or Brollar/French Collar:** A correctly fitting full collar is the best for any draught equine, though not easy to fit, and rarely used in RDA Groups. Equines can alter in shape throughout the season and may need more than one collar. Full collars are rather expensive and will add a considerable amount to the cost of a set of harness.
- **Breast collars:** Far more common and easier to fit. They are also less expensive and will often fit several sizes of equine. They should be padded and not too narrow, though not too broad for smaller ponies. The neck-strap should lie vertically in front of the slope of the withers.
- **Saddle/Pad:** The tree should be made of material which will give good clearance of the spine at all times and be well-padded with flaps/skirts sufficiently long and wide for the tugs to work on. Tugs must be adjustable and buckled to a freely flowing self-righting, sliding, back band, except on 4 wheelers with independent shafts when the back band should be fixed. On a 4-wheeler with fixed shafts, as on a standard 2-wheeler, then a sliding backband is essential.
- **Crupper:** should be well-padded, split and buckled and stuffed with linseed if made of leather. Other synthetic types on the market should be well-fitted and maintained.
- **Breeching:** A broad strap that can be padded for greater comfort. It should not be too long as this impairs the equine's braking power. A good guide for length is to measure around the quarters from stifle to stifle.
- **Breeching Straps:** These, together with the breeching, are the brakes for a single equine in harness and must be strong, well made and with sound buckles.
- **Traces:** Should be strong and at least 1 1/8 inches wide and of equal length. At the vehicle end there should be two crew holes or holes for mini-trace attachments. Quick-release fittings are recommended.
- **Trace Carriers** These are essential if the trace hooks or the swingletree are lower than the shafts. When fitted correctly the traces should be in a straight line of draught.

Bits

Liverpool Bits have proved to be most satisfactory for RDA. Other suitable carriage driving bits can be found in the RDA rulebook.

- The disabled driver's reins can be on plain cheek where there is no curb action at all.
- The RDA CD Coach's reins are usually one setting below those of the disabled driver, giving stronger curb action in case of an emergency (see Figure 1).

Wilson snaffles are not recommended (i.e. double rings).

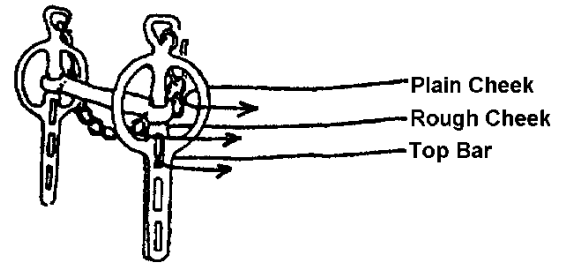


Fig. 1 - Rein fitting on Liverpool Bit

Reins

Two sets of single reins are required per vehicle. The second set of reins is held by the accompanying CD Coach for use when assistance is required. Coupled reins are accepted as an alternative.

A single set of reins is allowable only under certain specified conditions.



Fig. 2 – Looped reins



Fig. 3 – Removable Adjustable Loop



Fig. 4 Bar Attachment for Reins

- A flat type head collar must be worn under the bridle to attach the lead rope or disabled driver's reins where necessary.
- It is important that this does not interfere with the bridle or bit. (See Figure 5)
- On some equines it is better for the head collar to be worn over the bridle.

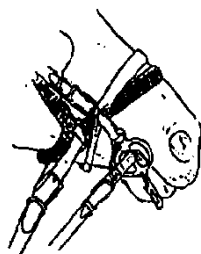


Fig. 5 - Reins Attached to Head collar (Head collar displayed in black)

- Reins can be webbing or leather but the billet should not be too long as, when set on rough cheek, they may drop down over the bars to lie incorrectly (see Figures 6a and 6b).

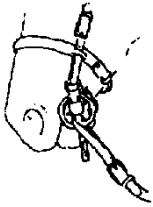


Fig. 6a - Billet too long

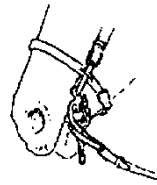


Fig. 6b – Lying incorrectly

Vehicles

- Careful consideration needs to be given to the suitability, particularly of 4-wheeled vehicles, for the disabled driver. The provision of a dashboard and sides are to be preferred as they give a sense of security. The position of the turntable, or the articulation, of a 4-wheeled vehicle must be considered, bearing in mind the experience of disabled drivers and CD Coaches and the use to which the vehicle will be put.
- Any Group considering using a 4-wheeler with no turntable or rear articulation for obstacles and/or cone driving, must consult the vehicle builder with regard to the suitability of the vehicle for the intended activity and must also contact Carriage Driving Lead in advance of the activity taking place.
- Only one disabled driver is allowed in a vehicle at any one time, except when taking part in pleasure drives. (see page 3)
- Wheelchairs must have brakes applied and be further secured by quick-release clamps or a suitable alternative. Semi-ambulant chair occupants may, at the discretion of the Organiser, wear a quick release safety belt. No electric wheelchairs are allowed.
- Reflectors must be fitted to the rear of the carriage if you intend driving on the public highway.

Spares

It is essential to include at least the following items in the spare bag on the carriage:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Lead Rope | 1 Hoof Pick |
| 1 Rein | 1 Sharp Knife |
| 1 Correct length Trace | 1 Complete First Aid Kit |
| 1 Hame strap (If full collar is worn) | 1 Mobile Phone |

Loading and Unloading of Wheelchairs

No electric wheelchairs may be used in an RDA vehicle.

It is essential that these instructions are strictly followed at all times.

The turnout must have:

The CD Coach correctly seated in vehicle with whip and both sets of reins.

Head Holder standing in front of equine holding lead rope that is attached to the headcollar.

2 Volunteers who will:

- Bring wheelchair to rear of vehicle when equine has been put to.
- Bring hydraulics down (Superstar)
- Bring ramp down or arrange ramps, depending on vehicle.
- Push chair up and put chair brakes on.
- Put ramp up in 2-wheeler.
- Bring Hydraulics up (Superstar) / Bring ramp up or remove ramps and store, depending on vehicle.
- Secure quick-release clamps/clips/straps.
- Check the balance in a two wheeler.
- Ensure that the driver is comfortable, and hand them their reins before the turnout moves off.

It is permissible to mount the CD Coach and driver into a four wheeler before putting to, following training and assessment.



Groups must practice the procedure of mounting/dismounting a driver in a wheelchair to ensure that the very vulnerable period of time spent with the ramp down is kept to a minimum.

Mounting and Dismounting of Semi-Ambulant Drivers

The CD Coach correctly seated in vehicle with whip and both sets of reins.

Head Holder standing in front of equine holding lead rope that is attached to the headcollar.

1 Volunteer who will:

- Assist the ambulant driver to mount/dismount the vehicle;
- Immediately remove any aids used by the driver, such as ramps, steps, boxes, wheelchair, from the vicinity of the vehicle.

Care and Maintenance of Vehicles

A few simple checks before each use and at regular intervals will help to keep your vehicles sound and safe.

Hints & Tips:

- Keep your vehicles under cover when not in use.
- Always use spanners of the correct size.

At the end of the season:

- Before putting the carriage away for the winter a little time spent touching up paintwork and varnish will be well spent.
- T-cut can be used to revive the finish on powder-coated surfaces.
- Ensure that any drain holes in the floor are clear. This will stop water puddling and help to avoid the wood rotting.

The following lists cover some of the main points requiring attention.

Intervals between checks will vary according to how often and in what conditions the carriage is used.

Vehicle Maintenance Checklist – Before Each Use:

- Check generally for any signs of damage or weakness.
- Check tyres for damage and remove flints etc.
- Check pressures of pneumatic tyres.
- Check that solid tyres are not coming out of the clincher channel.
- Check that the swingletree moves freely.
- Check that breeching staples are secure.
- Check that the loading ramp opens freely and is secure when closed.
- Check that wheelchair clamps operate properly and securely.

It is highly recommended that vehicles are serviced regularly by a competent person.

Vehicles which are not in sound condition must not be used for RDA.

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Vehicle Maintenance Checklist – At Regular Intervals:

- Check that wheels revolve freely and that bearings are adjusted to allow correct amount of “play”.
- Inspect bearings annually and replace if worn.
- Bearings must be packed with grease and the split pin must be fitted to prevent the large castle nuts becoming loose.
- Spray the seals on the inside faces of the wheels with WD40 or similar.
- Check the shafts for stress cracks, especially at clamping points.
- Check all nuts and bolts for tightness. Some bolts should not be too tight (e.g. leaf spring pivots).
- Check and lubricate loading ramp pivot points.
- Check for leaks in any hydraulic systems (e.g. Bennington lowering systems or brakes) and top up reservoirs with correct fluid.
- Inspect the swingletree bolt. If removed it must be replaced with a new high tensile bolt of correct size and quality with a new nylon locking nut. (Ideally obtained from the vehicle manufacturer).
- Lightly lubricate points where sliding ramps contact the vehicle chassis.

Accident Prevention (Vehicles)

- **Accidents can happen when rules are broken.**
- **At all times abide by the RDA Carriage Driving Safety Code and the Health and Safety Guidelines which can both be found on the MyRDA website.**
- **AT NO TIME must a disabled driver be in the vehicle alone.**
- **REMEMBER – If you acquire a *new equine, vehicle or item of harness*, they must be assessed before they are used in Group sessions.**