

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 once again in 2021, we anticipate that social distancing will be required for an extended period and this will inevitably have some impact on what groups will be able to do.

[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 around social distancing with mounting, leading and dismounting.](#) They clearly highlight the challenges that will be faced. Can your group operate with social distancing rules? 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, zoning and new protocols will all need to be in place. 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 use the current time to prepare. Some will want to be more cautious in their approach and [take longer](#) to get restarted - some will choose [\(or may need\)](#) to wait until later 2021.

We recommend that even those groups [that may not feel 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](#) and a completed **Covid-19 Risk Assessment** to RDA National Office (groupsupport@rda.org.uk) to confirm all measures have been taken to mitigate the risks of COVID-19. **Groups must wait for formal confirmation that they have been signed off to restart, before holding their first session or activity.**

To facilitate this all groups will need to go through the questions in the [Road to Restart – Are You Ready? document](#) and complete the **COVID-19 Risk Assessment**; taking action as required. Some groups may be able to do this quickly – others may take weeks 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:

- ✓ Equine Assessment and Induction Form
- ✓ Volunteer Availability Tool
- ✓ Participant Assessment Tool
- ✓ List of suitable products and suppliers
- ✓ Volunteer, Staff and Participant Consent Forms
- ✓ Glossary of Terms
- ✓ Example Resources and Posters
- ✓ [Weekly RDA UK webinars and Update email bulletins, as part of the Road to Restart plan](#)
- ✓ [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](#)

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 definitely 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. [Some 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. There is a Volunteer Availability Tool which you can use to help collate the information.
- You may also have volunteers who want to come back and help, but actually it's not 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 complete [and sign](#) a Getting Started Consent Form.
- 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 [signed](#) volunteer consent form. Should a participant's household member or carer attend to support the participant only, during this period of social distancing – they will need to complete a Consent Form and the Covid-19 Basic Training Record Sheet.

- Groups must carefully consider any requests for new participants at this time, as it is not possible to safely undertake all of the necessary pre-participation physical assessments due to ongoing social distancing requirements.

Coaching Sessions

Coaches will be contacted by either RDA National Office, in order to be invited onto organised Continuing Professional Development, or by their Regional Coach, in order to arrange a face to face to review where possible. We will prioritise coaches who are overdue their review from 2019/2020 first. If you are due a review in 2021 it is permissible and likely that your review may roll over to 2022. In the meantime we encourage you to attend training courses, which have been pre-approved or organised and published by the Training and Education Team, as CPD.

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.

Social Distancing is required, so 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. Refreshments (tea/coffee and cakes) should not be served and shared at sessions. Anyone who attends must be advised to bring their own refreshments if they wish.

First Aid

First Aid certificates were extended by 6 months in 2020, if they expired after 16 March 2020. All requalification training must now be 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 now able to offer a couple of options for renewals of Safeguarding Training. At this point in time, it is not practical to offer in person Face to Face Workshops, however we do now have the option of using Zoom. As before, 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 have 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 will come to an end on 31st March. 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.
- All tack and equipment will need to be sanitised between uses, and at the end of the day. The products list includes examples of products 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. There is a Participant Assessment tool available to help collate this information.
- Where assistance is needed within 2m e.g. mounting or side-walking, this should be provided by parents or carers where possible; this may mean them receiving training before sessions can start.
- Only essential family and carers should attend to keep numbers on site to a minimum and reduce the risk of cross contamination.
- Any participant taking part in sessions MUST complete a Getting Started Consent Form.

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