

# Equine Welfare Policy Statement

## Introduction

Horses, ponies and donkeys play a vital role in the RDA and must be handled with awareness and consideration at all times. The health and wellbeing of all our horses is vital to the delivery of a positive experience to all our participants. RDA has chosen to adopt the FEI Code of Conduct for the Welfare of the Horse which can be found in full via the links below:

[FEI Values](http://inside.fei.org/fei/about-fei/values) (<http://inside.fei.org/fei/about-fei/values>)

[FEI Code of Conduct – Horse Welfare](http://inside.fei.org/system/files/Code_of_Conduct_Welfare_Horse_1Jan2013.pdf) ([http://inside.fei.org/system/files/Code\\_of\\_Conduct\\_Welfare\\_Horse\\_1Jan2013.pdf](http://inside.fei.org/system/files/Code_of_Conduct_Welfare_Horse_1Jan2013.pdf))

Due to the unique nature of RDA activities, this policy statement further outlines our commitment to horse welfare. Within this policy the word horse can be taken to include any equine animal.

## Background

This policy statement, in conjunction with the FEI Code of Conduct and other RDA policies and procedures, should be adopted as a Code of Practice throughout RDA to safeguard the Health and Welfare of all our horses. RDA resources on the selection, training, welfare and use of horses in RDA are for guidance in setting standards and highlighting vital points - they are not intended to take the place of professional advice.

## Policy Principles:

- Horses should not be used for any RDA activity until they have been fully assessed by the Group Coach or Carriage Driving Assessor. Horses should be sound, in appropriate body condition and should not display any signs of stress during their introduction to RDA work. Veterinary advice must be sought where there is any doubt.
- They must be a minimum of 5 years old.
- There is no maximum age limit for RDA ponies however; the horses' fitness, body condition, age and the presence of any medical or orthopedic conditions must be taken into consideration when allocating work and carrying weights to older horses.
- Stallions must not be used.
- It is recommended that all horses owned by or under a long term loan agreement with the RDA are to receive an annual veterinary examination to remain eligible for use. Any other horse used in RDA activities, including commercially and privately owned animals, should also comply with this requirement.
- All tack/harness and special equipment should be inspected on a regular basis to ensure that it has been maintained, is in good condition and that it fits the horse on which it is being used. Group Coaches/Carriage Driving Coaches or designated person is to check the condition and fit before every RDA session.
- Abuse of a horse, including excessive use of whips, spurs or other equipment is forbidden. Any concerns regarding detrimental use of a rider or equipment should be reported to the Regional Equine Advisor or RDA Regional Vet.

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May 2017 (reviewed 2021)

- RDA weight carrying guidance is freely available and must be followed. Carrying weights should be modified according to the horse's body condition, age, fitness levels and the presence of any known medical or orthopedic conditions. Rider weight values should be modified according to their ability, balance and stability. During RDA activities carrying weight limits must not be exceeded for any reason.
- 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.
- All horses owned and long term loaned or deemed to qualify for the free vaccine scheme should be vaccinated against Equine Flu on an annual basis with an advisory of six monthly. We have a free vaccine scheme available and it is our aim that 100% of RDA horses are vaccinated.
- RDA Medication Control Policy differs to that of the FEI in some instances. Whilst illicit use of medication constitutes a serious welfare issue and will not be tolerated, withholding permitted medication may be just as detrimental. Person responsible for the veterinary care of RDA horses are advised to familiarise themselves with RDA Medication Control Policy. When attending RDA National Championships, a medical declaration form should be downloaded from our website and presented on arrival to the Stables team. Any queries about this beforehand should be sent to Emma Bayliss, Equine Co-ordinator who will liaise with RDA Vets.
- Whilst RDA recognise the value of a good working relationship with a veterinary surgeon, free confidential and impartial veterinary advice is available to all RDA groups and participants. We have appointed Regional Vets for every region within RDA. Their contact details can be obtained from Emma Bayliss [ebayliss@rda.org.uk](mailto:ebayliss@rda.org.uk)