

For immediate release – 24 March 2020

BEF advice on caring for horses and riding in the current climate

The British Equestrian Federation urges all members of the equestrian community to strictly adhere to the Government's directive to stay at home unless it's absolutely necessary to travel. The welfare of horses, and other livestock, is still essential, making your travel as an employee, owner or volunteer to provide care valid under the current guidance. Please keep your own health and safety in mind, as well as that of everyone around you.

At present, there are no definitive guidelines or restrictions around caring for and riding horses, and we will share anything which becomes available from government via the British Horse Council. To help through these uncertain and ever-changing times, we've put together some guidance for you around looking after and riding horses under the current requirements.

Going to the yard

- Keep visits to a minimum without compromising your horse's welfare – consider a buddy system with another livery
- Go to the yard solo – no passengers, family or children
- Change into clean yard clothes
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water before leaving the house
- Consider putting your horse on full livery if it's available and financially viable
- If your horse is on full livery, only make essential yard journeys. Keep in touch by phone, email or video call with the yard.

At the yard

- Respect any restrictions put in place by the yard owner or manager – they are for your safety and their own. It's their business and/or home.
- Wash hands thoroughly on arrival – take soap and water with you if the facilities aren't available
- Maintain social distancing with other liveries and avoid common areas, such as tea rooms, as much as possible. Keep at least two metres apart at any time
- Use your own equipment. If you need to use shared equipment such as wheelbarrows or hosepipes, disinfect the areas you're touching or wear disposable gloves
- Avoid activities that carry an increased risk of injury and consider wearing an up-to-standard riding hat while handling your horse
- Assess your horse's diet, and reduce energy intake according to the reduced levels of exercise you may be providing
- Take advantage of feed, hay and bedding suppliers who offer a delivery service, and liaise with them closely to ensure that their service isn't impacted. Make provision of essential supplies so you are prepared in the event of a shortage
- Limit the number of visitors to the yard, and ask that those who do visit closely follow hygiene and social distancing guidance

Leaving the yard

- Keep your visit timely and avoid lingering – only carry out what’s necessary to ensure your horse’s welfare and wellbeing
- Wash hands thoroughly before leaving the yard
- If you have hand sanitiser that’s at least 60% alcohol, use it to clean your hands when you get into your car

Arriving home

- Wash hands with warm water and soap straight away
- Have a specific ‘yard visit’ towel to dry your hands on
- Get changed immediately into clean, fresh clothes

If you keep your horse(s) at home, many of these points, particularly around hygiene and clothing, should be observed.

Prepare for self-isolation

Make a plan with your yard owner or manager, or your fellow liveryies, for what will happen if you’re unable to get to the yard. **If you have any of the symptoms of COVID-19 or if somebody in your household does, even if they’re only mild, do not visit your horse.** You will need to self-isolate for at least seven days or 14 in a shared household. If you have no alternative and it’s a question of welfare, you can attend to your horse but only as a last resort and within your own property boundaries when riding.

Riding

There is currently no Government guidance that we are aware of in relation to riding, so it is down to you to decide whether this is necessary. Given that health services are currently stretched to capacity, it’s sensible to avoid any activities that carry an increased risk of injury, such as jumping, fast work and riding a young, fresh or spooky horse. If you must hack out, be mindful of other people walking, cycling and running, and keep the two-metre distance. Lungeing, in-hand work and turn-out are good alternatives to ridden exercise.

We continue to strongly recommend against any unnecessary travel, which includes transporting your horse for anything other than emergency care. Travel to competition or training venues, having a coach travel to your yard, having a lesson at a riding centre or riding in large groups is not advised.

Equine professionals

Check in with your vet regarding their current policy for non-essential or non-emergency visits, which may include booster vaccinations. The British Equestrian Veterinary Association has advised its members to focus on emergency treatment at present. Farriers are permitted to work, but it’s best to contact them before any visit to discuss precautionary measures so you’re both ready for them.

Regular updates

The situation changes regularly so the guidance above is correct at the time of publication. We’ll endeavour to keep everyone as up to date as possible as any new information is made public. Please follow the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk) for all the latest general advice.

Other helpful links

[British Horse Society](#)

[World Horse Welfare](#)

[British Grooms Association](#)

[Equestrian Employers Association](#)