

ADDITIONAL ADVICE FOR EQUINE RESCUE ORGANISATIONS & REHOMING

In accordance with recent government guidance, animal rescue and rehoming organisations can continue to operate and provide for the ongoing needs of animals in their care. The full guidance approved by DEFRA can be found on the **NEWC** website.

NEWC recognise that many equine rescues will face their own unique challenges during the course of this pandemic. This additional advice has been developed to support our members and other

equine rescue organisations when planning their response to these challenges. There is a balance to be struck between offering specific guidance and being too prescriptive, especially at a time when flexibility is necessary to adapt to the range of situations that may arise. However, it is vital that rescue organisations discuss and build their plans in collaboration with key service providers and professionals who are critical to the success of their operational planning.



PREPARATION BEFORE ADMISSION

- Consider each individual situation and assess the risk before collecting the equine
- Prioritise space for equines in critical need or supporting owners in crisis
- Develop admission criteria to support employees with decision making.

For example: Equine in Critical Need:

- Compromised equine welfare already causing suffering or there is an imminent risk to life if treatment or intervention is not provided.

OR

- The condition of the equine is likely to deteriorate to such an extent that long term harm will result (deformed feet, dental pathology affecting feed intake or causing infection) if treatment or intervention is not provided.

AND

- Treatment or intervention in situ is not possible or appropriate.

- Conduct pre admission assessment to help assess if fit to transport, identify health & behaviour needs & plan for care on arrival.
- Ensure sufficient quarantine / isolation on admission is possible.
- Disease screening for infectious disease, such as strangles, must be considered to protect welfare of other equines if unable to maintain strict isolation
- Prioritise local solutions & avoid unnecessary journeys
- Can any paperwork be completed in advance and sent via email
- Cross sector co-ordinated approach where smaller rescues are unable to continue to operate.



CARE OF EQUINE IN A RESCUE ENVIRONMENT

- The primary focus of the rescue organisation should be to maintain & protect welfare of resident animals, as well as those who have the potential to be rehomed.
- Changes may need to be made to usual equine management. In doing so, consideration should be given to the individual needs of each equine.
- Routine interventions may need to be postponed in collaboration with your vet, farrier or equine dental technician.

It is important that a record is kept of the reasons for these decisions and a plan for future care developed. NEWC have developed a pro-forma to help with this.

- Get creative to keep equines occupied. This resource includes lots of creative enrichment ideas that all equines can enjoy:

<https://view.pagetiger.com/>

**EnvironmentalEnrichmentforDonkeys/
EnvironmentEnrichmentfordonkeys**

LINKS TO HELPFUL ADVICE BELOW:

- ▶ beva.org.uk/Coronavirus
- ▶ forgeandfarrier.co.uk/bfba-news/1071/covid-19-top-ten-guidelines-for-farriers.htm
- ▶ forgeandfarrier.co.uk/bfba-news/1069/bfba-advice-for-farriers-24-03-20-part-3.htm
- ▶ <https://britishgrooms.org.uk/coronavirus>
- ▶ bhs.org.uk/advice-and-information/coronavirus-covid-19



REHOMING

- Rehoming of equines should be limited to companion or young stock only. Ridden horses should not be rehomed at this time due to restrictions inhibiting the matching process.
- Rehoming should only take place where appropriate equine companionship is available in the new home or where equines are rehomed in pairs or groups.
- All rehomed equines must be microchipped & have an equine passport
- If a new owner plans to keep their new equine away from home and does not already have a need to travel to that location it would not be appropriate to rehome to them at this time. Doing so would generate additional daily journeys.
- Livery yards may not be accepting new equines at this time.
- Direct rehoming (home to home) where equines are rehomed without admission to a rescue organisation may be an option where detailed information about the equine and new home is available to support the matching process
- Equines should only be rehomed if their individual management needs can be maintained by the new owner in line with current government guidance and restrictions
- Rehoming checks and fitness to travel assessments will need to be planned with the veterinary surgeon providing service to the rescue organisation
- Prioritise rehoming to new owners who have already been approved
- Consider the use of virtual home visits to progress new applications where appropriate

- Where training is required before rehoming, consider virtual methods or delay rehoming until restrictions allow
- Plan for ongoing rehome checks via virtual methods where appropriate
- Check new owners are able source sufficient supplies of feed and bedding and have access to local professionals needed to support equine welfare – vet, farrier, equine dental technician
- Help new owners develop a care plan for their new equine and check they have support in place in case they become unwell or need to self-isolate.
- **Do not rehome an animal to a household in which one or more member is displaying symptoms of or has tested positive for Coronavirus – this will need to be verified with the household.**



FOSTERING

- Fostering may provide a good temporary solution to limit admissions and prevent unnecessary returns of rehomed equines
- Fostering or short term loans may be used until rehoming to those fosterers can be officially confirmed
- Ensure monitoring and support of equines in foster home.



PLANNING BEFORE EQUINE MOVEMENT

Before moving any equine make a plan on how to safeguard the people and equines involved taking into account:

- Social distancing and other biosecurity measures.
- Health and safety.
- The health, welfare and behaviour of the equine.
- Ensure that introduction of a new equine into an existing group or being put with a new horse for the first time is done safely.
- PPE, equipment available.
- Other personnel who may be needed e.g. handlers, vets.

Remember to:

- Allow additional time and have clear contingencies in place.
- Allocate roles.
- Give clear instructions.
- Plan for the duration of the journey including unloading on arrival at destination.
- Encourage employees to bring their own food / refreshments to minimise unnecessary stops for provisions.
- Provide employees with a letter supporting their journey for work purposes & remind them to have ID & any licences available in case of police checks.
- Have equine passport & any other information that cannot be sent digitally ready for safe handover. As an extra precaution documents can be placed in a sealed plastic envelope and left for 72 hours before opening. The envelope should be wiped with an appropriate disinfectant before handling.

- Plan vehicle access to place of collection (using routing tools & satellite maps may help).
- Use a vehicle check list to ensure routine safety checks have been carried out.
- Ensure employees involved are not unwell or should be self-isolating for any reason
- Establish the health / isolation status of other people involved (including the new owner) where possible.
- Communicate the plan clearly and in advance of the proposed movement.
- Have a contingency plan & be prepared to change your approach or decisions as needed.



EQUINE MOVEMENT

- Comply with relevant legislation and existing guidance to ensure that equines are fit to travel before loading and seek vet advice if concerned ([link to PDF](#)).
- Use competent (suitably experienced / qualified) personnel only.
- Additional persons may need to travel separately to respect social distancing.
- The vehicle must be fit for use and for the size, type and nature of the equines to be transported.
- Wear correct PPE for handling equines e.g. hat, gloves, appropriate footwear.
- Have access to sufficient hygiene supplies e.g. disinfectant, soap and water for handwashing, overalls and gloves.
- Carry an appropriate supply of bedding, forage and water on vehicle.
- Clean and disinfect vehicle thoroughly before and after use.
- Fuelling vehicle to be minimised & appropriate hygiene measures taken at service stations (e.g. gloves).



LOADING AND UNLOADING

- Park transporting vehicle appropriately for safe loading / unloading.
- Driver to stay in vehicle until everyone is ready for equines to be loaded / unloaded safely.
- Driver to prepare vehicle e.g. lowering ramp.
- Determine who is best to load / unload the equines based on the individual situation.
- As far as possible avoid any contact with other people, maintaining a 2 metre distance. Including when transferring paperwork and passports.
- Where this is not possible (e.g. handlers needed to help safe loading), take all available measures to mitigate risk.
- Plan handover of the equine to minimise contact with touch points of gates / doors and with other people. Any areas of concern / touch can be washed with soapy water.
- A bucket of soapy water should be ready for any necessary hand washing in a safe place close to the parking area.
- When loading ask owner/ handler to bring equine out of any stabling/housing and tie up if safe to do so, or allow handler access to the equine by opening doors / gates, keeping 2 metre distance & avoid multiple people entering enclosed spaces.
- Adopt the same process for unloading.