



RoR

Retraining of Racehorses®



Welfare rules

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RoR's commitment to welfare

RoR's welfare rules are designed to ensure the wellbeing of retired racehorses and support their successful transition into new careers. These rules are grounded in the principle that horse welfare is paramount, addressing both the physical and psychological needs of each animal.



Core elements include measures to prevent neglect and abuse, encourage responsible rehoming and ownership, and support retraining that helps horses adapt to second careers such as dressage, show jumping or leisure riding. Safeguarding and promoting welfare is central to all RoR activity, from competitions to education and participation events, ensuring former racehorses are treated with dignity and respect throughout their lives after racing.

RoR promotes comprehensive care, including appropriate nutrition, living conditions and veterinary support, in line with World Horse Welfare's 5 Domains of animal welfare and the 3Fs – Friends, forage and freedom. This holistic approach benefits the horses and promotes a culture of responsibility across the equestrian community.

The production of RoR's welfare rules is kindly supported by



Animal Welfare Act 2006



The Animal Welfare Act requires you to ensure that any horse or pony for which you are responsible, whether on a temporary or permanent basis:

- Has a suitable environment to live in.
- Has a healthy diet including access to fresh clean water.
- Is able to behave normally.
- Has appropriate company.
- Is protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

Furthermore, RoR actively encourages the involvement of retraining organisations who commit to upholding these welfare standards, thereby creating a network of accountability and support.

Charter for the Horse

As responsible members of the equestrian community, we pledge to uphold BEF's Charter for the Horse for the ethical and fair treatment of all horses involved with RoR operations and/or activities.

- **Empathy:** Recognising horses are intelligent and emotional beings, we always prioritise their mental and physical health and overall wellbeing.
- **Care:** Throughout their entire life, during exercise and rest, we offer horses a secure and suitable setting to create positive experiences that address their social, behavioural, nutritional and physical needs for a high quality of life.
- **Respect:** Through compassionate, mindful, patient and empathetic interaction, we foster positive relationships with horses based on trust and respect.
- **Ethics:** In all our equine interactions, whether for leisure, training or sport, we adhere to the highest standards of equine welfare, safety, equipment, veterinary care and biosecurity, always guided by ethical principles.
- **Consideration:** Each horse is an individual, and we strive to understand and meet their specific needs, including how they learn. We do not push horses beyond their health, fitness or ability levels, and we never let competitive or commercial influences compromise their welfare.
- **Learning:** Through continuously improving our equine knowledge, we evolve our behaviours based on education and informed advice from qualified professionals and the broader equestrian community.
- **Abuse:** RoR has a zero-tolerance policy for any form of abuse towards horses.

General welfare guidance



- **Health monitoring:** Regular veterinary check-ups to monitor the horse's physical and mental health are essential. This includes but is not limited to ensuring vaccinations are up to date and managing any pre-existing injuries or conditions.
- **Nutrition:** Providing a balanced diet that meets the nutritional needs of the horse is critical. This will include adequate quantities of high-quality forage, suitable protein, and supplements as needed. A guide to the nutritional requirements of horses can be found in the BHS feeding guidelines. However, it is recommended that owners seek specific feeding guidance from an independent equine nutritionist.
- **Environment:** Former racehorses should be kept in safe, clean, and spacious environments that allow for natural behaviours, including space to move freely, social interaction with other horses, and shelter from the elements.

Further information on the above can be found on the [BHS website](#).

RoR's horse welfare guidelines

General principles of welfare

- **Vaccinations:** General participation events (including education and camps)
 - Influenza:[†] a primary course of three vaccinations is recommended, followed by annual or six-monthly boosters depending on competition requirements.
 - Tetanus: a primary course of two injections, followed by boosters at 12 months and then every two years, is generally recommended, although specific intervals may vary between vaccine brands.
- **Doping and medication:** The misuse of medication or performance-enhancing substances is a serious welfare violation and will not be tolerated. Adequate recovery time must follow any veterinary treatment. For more information, refer to the [equine anti-doping and controlled medications policy](#).
- **Surgical interventions:** Surgical procedures that may compromise the welfare of a horse are prohibited.
- **Misuse of aids:** Any abuse through riding aids (natural or artificial, such as bits, spurs, or whips) is strictly prohibited. Practices that may cause distress, pain, or injury, whether in or out of competition, are not tolerated.
- **Euthanasia:** Euthanasia is a legitimate, and sometimes necessary option to alleviate suffering and prevent ongoing welfare compromise in horses, in line with [RoR's euthanasia policy](#).
- **Pet loss support:** Should you require support following the loss of a horse or other pet, the Blue Cross runs a free [pet loss support service](#).
- **Biosecurity and disease:** It is strongly recommended that any horse showing signs of a potentially contagious or infectious disease, be withdrawn from the event and reported to officials and a veterinarian.

[†] Please check the individual competition or show rules for their specific vaccination requirements. Horses entering any racecourse or sales venue for parades, competition or participation events must adhere to the [BHA vaccination rules](#).

Stabling and event conditions

Stabling

- Stables must be safe, clean, well-ventilated, and appropriately sized for each horse.
- Horses must have access to clean water, high-quality feed, suitable bedding, and appropriate washing facilities.

Events

- Events must be designed to safeguard horse welfare, including:
 - Safe riding and competition arenas.
 - Proper ground surfaces.
 - Consideration of weather conditions.
 - Sound stabling and site safety.

Injuries and emergencies

- If a horse becomes injured or exhausted during RoR activity, the rider must stop immediately and seek a veterinary evaluation.
- Injured horses must be transported appropriately, with emergency support and veterinary supervision.
- Incidents should be monitored, and risk factors (e.g., ground conditions, competition frequency) reviewed to reduce injury rates.
- In severe cases, humane euthanasia may be necessary to prevent suffering and must be performed by a veterinarian.

Extreme heat guidance

During periods of extreme heat, horses must have access to clean water, shade, and be monitored closely for signs of dehydration or heat exhaustion.

- Do not restrict water after exercise – drinking should be encouraged.
- Be aware of signs of heat stress: lethargy, dark gums, panting, irregular heartbeat.
- In cases of overheating, begin aggressive cooling immediately and contact a vet.

For full guidance, including emergency cooling methods and dehydration signs, please refer to the [RoR extreme heat guidance](#).

Unsoundness and behaviour

- **Soundness:** Horses deemed unsound by stewards or officials must be withdrawn from the activity immediately by the participant and/or owner.
- **Manners:** Stewards or officials may ask for removal of a horse showing unacceptable behaviour at any RoR event.

Training and horse management

Training practices

- Horses must be trained on suitable, safe surfaces.
- Training must align with the horse's maturity, physical capacity, and discipline.
- Positive reinforcement training methods should be adopted as the default position for training of horses.
- Abusive or fear-inducing methods are strictly forbidden.

Tack, farriery and turnout

- Foot care and shoeing must be of the highest standard.
- All tack must be properly fitted to avoid pain, injury, or interference with natural movement.
- Sensory hairs are the hard hairs located on the horse's muzzle and around the eyes, also known as whiskers, that are used for sensation. It is strongly recommended that horses should not have whiskers trimmed or removed (other than for veterinary purposes or with a vet's certificate). Furthermore, under some disciplines' rules, trimming of sensory hair is banned.

Identification and travel

- All horses must have a Weatherbys or racing jurisdiction passport.
- All horses must be microchipped, as per UK law (since October 2018).
- It is a legal requirement that a horse's passport accompanies the horse at all times when it is being transported.
- Horses must be fit to travel in accordance with World Horse Welfare guidelines.
- During transportation, horses must be fully protected against injuries and other health risks.
- Vehicles must be safe, well ventilated, maintained to a high standard, disinfected regularly and driven by competent personnel.
- Travel plans must allow for regular rest, feeding, and watering.
- Guidelines for transporting horses can be found on the [BHS](#) and [World Horse Welfare](#) websites.

Participation in RoR activity

At all stages of a horse's preparation, training, and competition, wellbeing must always take precedence over all other considerations. RoR urges all those involved in equestrian sport to attain the highest possible levels of education relevant to the care and management of the competition horse.

General guidelines for participation

- **Handling and training methods:** Former racehorses must only undergo training that matches their physical capabilities and level of maturity for their respective disciplines. They should only be subjected to methods that are based on positive reinforcement rather than fear or punishment. Adequate rest periods should be provided to prevent overtraining and allow for recovery.
- **Psychological wellbeing:** Attention must be given to the psychological state of the former racehorse. This includes minimising stress, ensuring social interaction, and avoiding harsh training regimes that can lead to anxiety or behavioural issues.
- **Transition plans:** Developing a structured plan for transitioning the horse from racing to retraining for a second career, is vital to support the welfare of former racehorses. It is recommended that a specific retraining plan is designed for each horse, taking in to account the horse's racing career and the environment in which they are to be kept going forwards.
- **Monitoring progress:** Regular assessment of the horse's progress during retraining to ensure that any issues are identified and addressed promptly, adjusting the training and care plan as needed.
- **Regulatory compliance:** Adherence to local and national regulations related to animal welfare and industry-specific guidelines, including any requirements from the equestrian body that you are competing or participating under.



- **Fitness and competence:** Participation in competition and other RoR activity is restricted to horses of appropriate fitness and riders/handlers who are competent at the required level. During competition, horse fitness and rider/handler competence will be assessed by the judge.
- **Health status:** No horse experiencing or showing symptoms of disease, injury, lameness or other significant ailments or pre-existing conditions should participate, or continue to participate, when to do so would compromise its welfare. Veterinary advice must be sought whenever there is any doubt.
- **Pregnant/recently foaled mares:** Mares must not participate in ridden activity after their fourth month of pregnancy or before the foal is weaned. Most mares can begin a gradual reintroduction to ridden exercise or training around eight weeks after a complication-free foaling. Any mare that has experienced complications at birth should be fully examined by a veterinarian and passed as fit to compete before recommencing activity. These requirements also apply to mares that have lost a foal.

Equine carrying capacity

- RoR aims to encourage all members to uphold the highest standards of equine welfare, health and wellbeing, and central to this is the harmonious partnership between horse and rider.
- The rider should be an appropriate size for their horse and suitably mounted, in terms of weight, height, size and frame.
- The horse and rider partnership must be in balance, and the rider should not exert undue influence or restrict the horse's natural way of going.
- RoR discourages the participation of horses that are not in appropriate condition for competition or other participation events, and judges or officials will take this into account when making their assessments and awards.
- RoR reserves the right to disqualify competitors or remove participants at RoR events if it is established that the horse's welfare and way of going is compromised.

RoR horse/rider weight ratio policy

There is growing concern that the welfare of some horses may be compromised by riders whose body weight exceeds the horse's carrying capacity. Several factors influence this, including:

- The rider's skill level, balance, and fitness.
- The horse's size, weight, condition, and fitness.
- The type and intensity of exercise.
- The suitability and fit of the tack.

As a general guide, the combined weight of the rider, saddle and other associated riding equipment (bridle, hat, boots, numnah, girth etc) should not exceed 17% of the horse's optimum body weight (based on a healthy body condition score of 3/5).

For example:

- A 500kg Thoroughbred should carry no more than 85.7kg (rider, saddle and other riding equipment).
- Overweight horses (condition score of 4/5 or 5/5) are already carrying excess body mass, and rider weight limits should be adjusted downward accordingly.

The maximum permissible rider-to-horse weight ratio is 20%

[More information on condition scoring your horse.](#)

RoR policy on blood and visible injury

The welfare of former racehorses is our top priority. Any signs of injury or distress, including visible blood, will be taken seriously and acted upon immediately.

Any visible injury resulting from the misuse of aids will lead to the rider being asked to remove the horse from the event or elimination from the competition. The presence of blood is not a necessary condition for elimination or removal from an event.

During educational or other participation events

- If a coach or other RoR official suspects blood or injury on the horse before or during the event, they will stop the horse for examination.
- If blood is confirmed, the rider will be asked to remove the horse immediately. This decision is final.
- If there is no blood, but a visible injury is present, that would compromise the welfare of the horse if they were to continue within the event, the rider will be asked to remove the horse from the event immediately.
- If no blood is found and there is no visible injury, the horse may resume its participation in the event.

During competition

- If a judge suspects blood or visible injury on the horse during the competition, they will stop the horse for examination.
- If blood is confirmed, the horse will be eliminated immediately. This decision is final.
- If there is no blood, but a visible injury is present, that would compromise the welfare of the horse if they were to continue within the competition, the horse will be eliminated from the competition immediately.
- If no blood is found and there is no visible injury, the horse may resume its participation in the competition.

During warm-up (when a welfare steward or RoR official is present)

- If a steward or official notices blood or visible injury during warm-up, the rider will be informed and the horse inspected.
- If blood or visible injury is confirmed, the rider will be advised to retire the horse.
- If the rider refuses, the matter will be reported to the judge and the horse will be eliminated from the class.
- The horse may only enter later classes if the steward or official and judge confirms that it is fit to continue.

After the class (post-competition inspection)

- If blood or visible injury is found in the horse's mouth or spur area, and confirmed by a steward, the horse will be eliminated.
- If blood or visible injury is found elsewhere, the steward or official and judge will assess the injury and decide if the horse should be eliminated or withdrawn from further competition.

Sore patches

- Any horse with a sore patch (rubbed or inflamed skin) in a location that risks being broken if ridden must be withdrawn.
- If discovered after the competition, the horse will only be eliminated if the skin is broken.
- Stewards and/or any other RoR official present may take images to evidence any decisions made.



Penalties for contravening welfare rules

RULE	PENALTY
Lameness	Elimination
Blood	Elimination
Broken skin/visible injury	Elimination
Misuse of aids	Elimination
Rider and equipment exceeding 20% of horse's bodyweight	Elimination
Witnessed abuse	Elimination

Enforcement of RoR welfare rules

- All incidents involving potential welfare breaches will be documented and reported.
- RoR reserves the right to re-evaluate any horse or participant where abuse is suspected.
- Welfare stewards and officials act in an advisory capacity to judges, who are empowered to enforce these welfare standards, with immediate authority to act on welfare concerns.

RoR reserves the right to disqualify entries where it is determined that the horse's welfare or way of going is compromised.

RoR welfare complaints procedure — guidance for members, competitors and officials

Read our guidance on how to report a [welfare complaint](#) and download our [welfare incident report form](#).



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