RISK ASSESSMENT POLICY

What is Risk Assessment?

1. The RDA Health and Safety Guidelines says that all RDA centres "must have a written risk assessment to be reviewed annually by their management committee" but just what is a risk assessment, what does it do and how do we prepare one?

2. A risk assessment is a straightforward way of examining what, in your activities, could cause harm to people and weighing up whether or not the right precautions have been taken to prevent harm.

3. The terms 'hazard' and 'risk' are worth understanding:

   'Hazard' simply means something that could cause harm.
   'Risk' is the chance, high or low, that somebody will be harmed by the hazard.

4. The important things that you will need to decide are whether a hazard is significant and whether you have sufficient precautions so that the risk from it is small.

5. Before starting to assess risk it is important to be sure that you have done all the things that the law specifically says you must do. Such as preventing access to dangerous parts of any machinery or making sure that any lifting equipment has been examined at the required intervals. Then move on to the risk assessment.

Simple Steps to Risk Assessment

6. Look for the hazards. Examples of some of the sorts of hazards that you might find at RDA centres are given below but there may be others. For this reason it is important that the assessment is done by someone who has good knowledge of the particular centre and its activities. Write down the hazards that you have noted.

7. Decide who might be harmed and how. Who could be affected by the hazard? Workers, volunteers, riders, helpers, visitors, spectators, members of the public? Even people who may not be supposed to be there such as inquisitive children. Remember that people may not always act or behave in the way that you might wish or expect.

8. You should now have a list of hazards appropriate to your centre. You should also a clear idea about who could be affected by each of them. You now need to decide what, if anything, you need to do about them. This is the 'assessment' part of risk assessment.

9. For each of the hazards that you have identified, consider how likely it is that it could actually cause harm and how serious that harm could be. The aim is to make all risks small. Even if you have already taken some precautions against some hazards, look at them again.

In general the more likely that something is to cause harm and the more serious the possible consequences then the more pressing is the need for action. If something is unlikely to cause harm and the severity of that harm would be very minor then it is unlikely that more precautions would be needed.

10. If you find that there are things that need doing then draw up an 'action list' and give priority to things that could have the most serious consequences or where the likelihood is highest. Ask yourself:

    a. Can we get rid of the hazard altogether?

    b. If not, how can we control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

    c. To try to control the risks use the following options, in order

        (1) Try a less risky option.

        (2) Prevent access to the hazard.

        (3) Organise activity to reduce exposure to the hazard.

        (4) Use personal protective equipment.

        (5) Try to limit the effect of the hazard.

11. Record you assessment. You need to record the significant results of your assessment, the hazard list and action list are the start or your records. You should also record when and how any action was taken and you can make reference to other documents such as the RDA website, rider assessment etc. These simple records will help you keep track of what you have done and the things that you still need to do.

12. Keep you assessment up to date. Your activities may vary over time, if so identify the hazards that you can deal with them. After that, make an effort to spot and deal with any additional hazards. You should also update your assessment if there have been any significant changes, such as new activities or changes to the site. In any event you should review your assessment from time to time (at least annually) to make sure that the precautions are still appropriate and working effectively.

Examples of Possible Hazards at RDA Centres

13. Remember that centres will vary enormously. They vary physically from large equestrian centres to a paddock borrowed for short intervals, they may undertake different ranges of activities and there may be differences in the client bases. Not all of the hazards noted here will exist at all centres, certainly there will be some found at some centres which are not mentioned here. Don't forget activities ancillary to the riding activities such as an office, if there is one, or accommodation at centres offering holidays. You know your centre best so you are best placed to identify the hazards and to deal with the risks.

14. Some of the hazards may already be included and addressed within other RDA policies, some precautions may be best tackled consistently across the association (for example rider capability assessment procedures), some hazards may be peculiar to a limited number of centres, some hazards and precautions might need specialist advice (e.g. veterinary) to assess or tackle properly.

Examples of Hazards.

(Examples of possible relevant issues)

Riders (clients or volunteers) falling from horseback. (During instruction, performance, competition, turning out. Nature of ground surface on route taken. Individual riders' physical capabilities. Tack, clothing & safety gear employed. Use of leaders and side walkers).

Falls during mounting. (Mounting aids & methods, nature of ground surface, riders' physical capabilities).

Strain injury when assisting mounting. (Mounting aids & methods, riders' physical capabilities, training and instruction of helpers).

Faulty, unsuitable or badly fitted tack. (Tack inspection, selection & identification. Fitting and adjustment. Cleaning & maintenance routines).

Injury during vaulting/vaulting practice. (Condition of vaulting/practice area. Individual capability. Supervision, instruction and assistance).

Falls from carriages. (Physical condition of driving route, condition of carriage. Supervision, instruction & assistance).

Carriage collision or overturning. (Physical condition of driving route, condition of carriage. Supervision, instruction & assistance. Organisation and arrangement of driving activity).

Slips trips and falls on the same level. (Uneven ground or floors, trailing hoses or cables, slippery or wet areas, possibility of spillages, impact of adverse weather).

Falling from a height. (Maintenance, haylofts, storage areas, other access to elevated areas. Use of ladders, permanent means of access, guard rails. Contractors coming onto site).

Hazardous substances. (e.g. cleaning agents or veterinary medication. Warning labels on packaging. Storage & use, access, existence of alternative substances, methods of preventing exposure, methods of controlling exposure, protective clothing or equipment. Contaminated sharps disposal).

Pesticides. (Fungicides, herbicides, insecticides, rodenticides, wood preservatives. Warning labels. Safe storage, methods of disposal, competence of users).

Dust and other airborne substances. (Can cause asthma, respiratory sensetisation, allergic reaction, rhinitis, lung damage, infection & other harm. Dust prevention, dust limitation techniques, controlling exposure, levels of ventilation, location of dust generating activities, number of people exposed).

Zoonoses. (Diseases transmitted from animals to man. Ringworm - by skin contact, especially through cuts & abrasions, symptom identification, treatment of infected animals, personal protective equipment, personal hygiene facilities. Leptospirosis - contracted via rat urine either directly or indirectly via e.g. animal feeds or bedding. Pest control, care of cuts & abrasions, personal protective equipment & personal hygiene facilities. Tetanus - can be passed from horses to humans via droppings or bites. Vaccination & care of cuts & abrasions).

Electrical wiring and equipment. (Age of the electrical system & when it was last inspected. Examination/testing of fixed or portable equipment. Routine checks made by staff. Fault protection, circuit breakers, residual current devices. Equipment used in wet areas. Use of safe low voltages. Use of extension leads. Modifications to installation & equipment. Vulnerability to damage).

Failure or malfunction of lifting equipment. (Thorough examination at required intervals, routine checks by staff. Observance of safe working loads & safe methods of use. Ground surface on which equipment used. Training & supervision for users).

Violence. (Intruder security, disposition of clients. What is known about past incidents or aggressive behaviour or threats).

Lone Working. (Tasks requiring more than one person, monitoring lone workers to ensure they remain safe, raising the alarm in case of illness, accident or emergency).

Fire. (Flammable substances, materials and structures. Highly flammable substances including fuel. Possible sources of ignition, smoking rules. Fire fighting, procedures and evacuation. Special provision for those with physical or mental limitations).

Inadequate lighting. (Sufficient light for safe working or riding activity, location and /or protector of light fittings, suitability of switches, especially if outside).

Vehicle movement onto, from or within site. (Avoid pedestrians/riders and vehicles using the same area. Avoiding need for reversing. Designated walkways. Supervision of children or less aware clients. Lines of sight within the site and on entry/exit. Speed limitation. Restricting vehicular access).

Machinery. (Tractors, power take offs, grass cutters, straw cutters, feed rollers, horse walkers, pressure washers. Maintenance regimes and routine checks, preventing access to moving parts, safety of any electrical machinery. Training and supervision for users).

Ancillary equipment. (Equipment incidental to the core activities e.g. DIY, catering, mechanical handling, boilers etc. Physical condition, electrical safety, inspected where necessary, instruction and training on use, restriction to authorised personnel).

Manual Handling. (Consider the task, load, environment & individual capability. Not just lifting & carrying. Can it be avoided? Assess to reduce risk of injury. Train for handling that can't be avoided).

Being kicked, bitten, trapped or crushed by a horse. (Who has access to the horses and in what circumstances? Suitability of the animals. Confined spaces, loading/unloading horse boxes. Experienced handlers. Adequate instruction, supervision & training for all).

Use of spectator seating. (Ground conditions, location, load capacity, integrity & erection, falls from tiered seating, safe access & egress for spectators).

Unauthorised access. (To stabling, storage, arenas, riding areas, machinery, equipment, hazardous substances, electrical installations. Prevention, awareness, reducing risks arising from access).

Falling items. (Collapse of stacked items such as bales, items falling from high level storage, maintenance activities, contractors on site. Likely results of impacts from horses, people or vehicles).

Parts of the premises that might cause injury. (Sharp edges or projections, low headroom, finger traps in gates, shutters, doors etc. Drainage or inspection chambers and covers).