

# A SAFE RETURN TO EQUESTRIAN SPORT & RECREATION GUIDELINES FOR BC



PRACTICAL STEPS FOR THE COMMUNITY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Horse Council BC's vision statement "a British Columbia where quality opportunities to participate in equestrian sport and recreation are available to ALL".



# WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER

## A MESSAGE FROM THE HORSE COUNCIL BC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

During this unprecedented time, we are all looking for ways to connect and return to recreation and competition. Horse Council BC is pleased to share these Return to Sport guidelines for the equestrian community.

The health and safety of our members and community is the foundation of our plan for a return to organized sport. It is important that we follow the lead of Dr. Bonnie Henry, BC Provincial Health Officer and our partners at viaSPORT as we begin return to recreation, training and some competition with friends and community we have missed.

Together we must prioritise the health and safety of our athletes, parents, coaches, officials, and the public as the community carefully returns to activities.

Sincerely,  
Horse Council BC  
Board of Directors



# OVERVIEW – BC’S RESTART PLAN

**Phase 2** (mid-May onwards) of the [BC Government’s Restart Plan](#) allows for a limited return to recreation and sport activities, including those sanctioned by Provincial Sport Organizations.

viaSport, Horse Council BC’s organizational link to government, has been clear that the primary focus in Phase 2 will be geared towards community participation and training rather than competition.

Using [viaSPORT's general sport sector guidelines](#) reviewed by the Provincial Health Office and WorksafeBC, the Horse Council BC Return to Sport plan addresses a return to play with limited group sizes, physical distancing, minor modifications to activities as needed, reduced touch points, and a focus on skill development.

This document has been prepared by Horse Council BC. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to our members for a safe return to activities with strategies for mitigating the spread of COVID-19 and helping us all get back to what we love to do, riding/driving/vaulting with our horses!

During this pandemic, public health measures are constantly being re-evaluated and thus the information contained in this plan may be updated, revised, or withdrawn in light of any new information released by government health authorities.

# GOALS OF OUR RETURN TO SPORT PLAN



To protect our communities and do our collective best to halt the spread of COVID-19.

To provide guidance and tools to Horse Council BC members (clubs, affiliates, facilities, coaches and organizers) for a safe return to equestrian activities while adhering to BC health authority orders and recommendation and BC's Restart Plan.

To help reconnect our members and promote the well-being of our community through a gradual return to our sport and recreational activities.

# PHASED IN RETURN TO SPORT

## BRIEF OVERVIEW



The [BC Government's Restart Plan](#) outlines four distinct phases.

Phase I ended in mid-May and Phase 2 of the plan began, which includes a return to recreation and organized sport.

### PHASE 2

In Phase 2, the BC Government is asking people to stay close to home and avoid any travel between communities that is not essential.

### PHASE 3

If transmission rates remain low or decline, we will enter Phase 3: people can begin travelling throughout B.C. It is anticipated that this may be possible as early as late June or sometime in the summer.

### PHASE 4

Phase 4 (return to "normal") is conditional on at least one of the following; wide vaccination, "community immunity", broad successful treatments. Until then, large scale events and gatherings will not be permitted.

# RISK MITIGATION

Many liability insurance policies do not cover claims relating to communicable diseases or pandemics and Directors and Officers insurance may include specific pandemic exclusions. As in all areas of life right now, participation in organized activities carries with it some personal risk as does hosting activities and resuming business.

June 10, 2020 The Province of British Columbia **takes action to support return to sport**. Government has created a ministerial order that protects amateur sport organizations, their employees and volunteers from liability [read more](#).

By Provincial Health order all organizations resuming business must have a COVID Safety Plan that reflects increased loosening of restrictions over the next 12 – 18 months. These plans **must be in compliance with** [orders and guidance from the Provincial Health Authority](#). They must be made available to the public both by being posted, clearly visible, on the wall of the organization's facility, and posted on their website.

We recommend that each organization have their COVID-19 Safety Plan approved by their Board of Directors (if applicable) prior to restarting activities. Horse Council BC will not be able to approve COVID Safety Plans for member clubs and facilities.

Additionally, Horse Council suggests you check with your insurance provider to understand your coverage and any unique risks associated with the pandemic, consider seeking legal counsel to ensure your waivers are current and address current circumstances (sample safety plans, waivers and other helpful resources can be found of the [HCBC Return to Sport page](#)).

Have anyone using your facility read and sign your waiver or acknowledgement of risk and complete a COVID-19 self assessment.



# RISK MITIGATION

All organizers hosting activities sanctioned by Horse Council BC will be required to agree to, and include the following disclaimer in their prize list recognizing the scope of HCBC sanctioning.

*"It is the responsibility of the show/event committee, or organizers and the facility owners and managers to ensure that all BC Health Authority and WorkSafeBC directives are followed and enforced. Horse Council is not a regulatory body and it is understood and agreed that sanctioning and approval of either a HCBC Provincial circuit event or Equestrian Canada Bronze or Silver competition relates to the use of the rule book and approved officials only".*

The health and safety of everyone coming to the facility or attending the activity is paramount and every decision should be based around that premise. Some facilities may choose not to reopen or not to allow for certain activities to resume based on their own setup, risk tolerance and the health of themselves, their family members, staff or clients. This is their right and should be respected.

The Provincial Health Officer's direction is that guidelines should cover three things:

1. Processes to open safely
2. Measures to keep people safe to avoid further outbreaks
3. A plan in the event that a case or an outbreak should occur



# RISK MITIGATION

It will be important that we all continue to take our cues from the Provincial Health Authority and the provincial government. The ongoing implementation of the Return to Sport Plan will be monitored and updated as necessary when circumstances or provincial guidance change. B.C. health officials outline that the risk of transmission is subject to two variables that we need to modify to reduce transmission risk:

Contact intensity – how close you are to someone and for how long

Number of contacts – how many people are in the same setting at the same time

Modifying from high to low can be based on a range of controls. Different actions have differing levels of protection and whenever possible we should use the action that offers the most protection. The following are listed from highest level of protection to lowest.

Physical distancing measures – to reduce density of people (number and duration of contacts)

Engineering controls – physical barriers, increased ventilation, traffic flow

Administrative controls – rules and guidelines

Non-medical masks and other PPE

The sport specific guidelines provided by Horse Council BC are meant to supplement the requirements and recommendations from BC Health Authorities and the viaSPORT guidelines and WorkSafeBC.

*For more information about how to conduct an assessment and develop a plan, please see 1. [COVID-19 Returning to Safe Operations](#) 2. [BC Public Health Orders](#) 3. [viaSPORT Return to Sport Guidelines](#)*



# GENERAL GUIDELINES

Equestrian is a multi-disciplinary sport that most participants pursue in outdoors venues.

The provincial health authority has stated that outdoor activities are lower risk as compared to indoor activities. Low contact sports are also lower risk than contact sports.

All equestrians and guardians are expected to adhere to the Provincial Health Officer's (PHO) orders and guidelines.

For more information visit [BC Disease Control Centre COVID-19](#)





# GENERAL GUIDELINES – TO BE RESPECTED AT ALL TIMES

- Each person planning to engage in equestrian activities in public is expected to evaluate their health and state of mind prior to departing. In this time of uncertainty, distractions can contribute to accidents. Only ride if you are healthy and take extra care; pay attention to your surroundings.
- If you have any symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, headache, or shortness of breath), you should NOT participate in sport. If these symptoms begin during an organized equestrian activity, you must leave immediately and contact your local public health office for recommendations. You must also inform your club, host facility and/or personal coach.
- In addition, the following individuals should not participate in organized sport activities:
  - Any person who receives a diagnosis of COVID-19. Individuals must comply with the current mandated self-isolation policy as per the BC Ministry of Health ([www.gov.bc.ca](http://www.gov.bc.ca)).
  - Any person who has been told to self-isolate.
  - Any person who lives in a home with or has been in close contact with someone with symptoms of COVID-19.
  - Any person who has arrived in British Columbia from outside of Canada within the last 14 days as they are mandated to self-isolate and monitor for symptoms for 14 days upon their arrival.



# OTHER GENERAL GUIDELINES –

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS IN YOUR PLANNING AND ENSURE YOU INCLUDE ALL REQUIREMENTS IN THE VIASPORT GUIDELINES AS PER BC HEALTH AUTHORITIES

## Controlling Facility Access

The size of each facility, the number of available riding rings will influence the number of people who should be on the property at any given time. Be sure there are no instances where the physical distancing cannot be met. (the current Phase 2 group size limit by order of the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) is 50)

- Maintain one entry and one exit point to the barn. Ensure proper signage displays each point.
- Assign times for riders, farrier, vets and have specific clean working areas for them.
- Schedule rides to ensure that people are not arriving and leaving at the same time.
- Plan to control group size by encouraging no loitering: ride, cool out and leave as swiftly as possible.
- No end-of-ride gatherings unless it is possible to maintain physical distancing guidelines.
- Set up a delivery area and process and avoid passing things from person to person (including feed, bedding, supplies, etc.)
- Limit attendees to ensure that physical distancing guidelines are respected and total number of people (staff, volunteers, coaches, officials, athletes and other personnel) do not exceed provincial guidelines.
- Consider keep viewing areas, lounges, concessions, ringside seating areas closed.
- Have a facility diagram of the premises; identifying traffic routes, entry exit points, animal housing areas, storage areas and other areas onsite where people, horses and equipment may interact.
- Maintain controlled access to washrooms and maintain sanitization of such.
- Post signage reminding attendees of physical distancing and proper hygiene rules ([BCCDC printable poster](#))

A photograph of a rider on a brown horse, wearing a helmet and riding boots, in an outdoor setting with trees in the background. The image is used as a background for the title and introductory text.

# OTHER GENERAL GUIDELINES –

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS IN YOUR PLANNING AND ENSURE YOU INCLUDE ALL REQUIREMENTS IN THE VIASPORT GUIDELINES AS PER BC HEALTH AUTHORITIES

## Facility Operations:

- In case of an outbreak maintain proper trace-back protocol. Make sure you have current contact information for every person entering the premises.
- Take registrations online whenever possible and if this is not possible ensure proper protective protocols are in place.
- Discourage drop-in attendees so group numbers are better managed.
- Hand washing and sanitizing stations should be provided with signage directing proper use. [BCCDC Poster-Handwashing](#)
- COVID-19 posters for the general public and employees encouraging good handwashing are to be posted in appropriate locations, where they will be most noticed, including washrooms.
- Provide PPE equipment for staff and have on hand in the event that someone needs to respond to a situation requiring personal contact.
- Maintain controlled access to washrooms and maintain sanitization of such.
- **Consider allowing only one person/one horse in the tack up area, round pen or arena at a time.**
- Recommend that horse owners keep their own tack and equipment in their vehicle and if safe, to groom and tack up horse in its stall or paddock. If the only practical location to groom or tack up is shared then all touch points must be disinfected after each use.
- If feasible, designate a staff person or volunteer to open and close the horse's gate, riding ring gate, etc. so the owner/riders do not need to touch surfaces.
- If anyone or a member of their household is unwell, they are not to visit the stable.
- Clean all shared surfaces regularly with soap or disinfectant, provide or require people to bring their own sanitizing gel or wipes. Disinfecting should include shared surfaces such as gates, latches, doorknobs, light switches and may also include brooms, manure forks, wheelbarrows, and tack etc.
- Post physical distancing reminder signage inside and outside in obvious locations. [BCCDC Poster physical distancing](#)
- Use signs and markings to direct clients, service providers, to indicate appropriate distances to stand, to mark direction of travel, to designate entrances and exits, or to identify a drive-thru lane or pick up zone.



# OTHER GENERAL GUIDELINES –

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS IN YOUR PLANNING AND ENSURE YOU INCLUDE ALL REQUIREMENTS IN THE VIASPORT GUIDELINES AS PER BC HEALTH AUTHORITIES

## Cleaning and Disinfecting

All commonly touched surfaces must be sanitized after individual use using an approved sanitizer such as: 1/3 cup bleach per 1 gallon of water OR 2 tablespoons bleach per 1 quart water. This will give you a 1000+ ppm disinfecting solution. Or you can use accelerated hydrogen peroxide or disinfectant.

## Practice Physical Distancing

Ensure everyone takes practical steps and is able to comply with and maintain the 2-meter physical distancing directive at all times while at the facility.

## Managing Horse Care

Any handling or riding should be restricted to activity that involves the fewest handlers, but still allows for proper exercising and care of the horses.

This could include:

- turnout in large fields, riding rings, lunging, hand walking, or riding, preferably by the same individual each day.
- Ideally, to minimize the handling of equipment, one person should be assigned to specific chores.
- After each use, all equipment should be sanitized and put away in such a way that no one else can come into contact with it inadvertently.

A photograph of two horses' heads in a stable stall. The horse on the left is brown, and the one on the right is dark grey. They are both looking down. The stall has a metal latch on the left and a wooden door on the right.

# OTHER GENERAL GUIDELINES –

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS IN YOUR PLANNING AND ENSURE YOU INCLUDE ALL REQUIREMENTS IN THE VIASPORT GUIDELINES AS PER BC HEALTH AUTHORITIES

## Commercial Operators with Staff

Employers must complete **WorkSafe BC Covid-19 Information for employer for returning to safe operations:**

<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-returning-safe-operation>

Employees must complete the self-assessment tool <https://bc.thrive.health/> at the start and end of each shift. Employees who upon completion of the self-assessment tool determine they may have signs or symptoms of COVID-19 will immediately report to the employer, while ensuring physical distancing of 2m (e.g., reporting by phone).

Additional workplace guidance for sector employers and employees from Agri - Agrifoods Canada

<http://www.agr.gc.ca/eng/workplace-guidance-for-sector-employers-and-employees/?id=1588862952557>

A woman with long dark hair is gently touching the nose of a dark brown horse. The horse is tied with a rope to a wooden post. The background shows the interior of a stable with wooden beams and other horses.

# OTHER GENERAL GUIDELINES –

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS IN YOUR PLANNING AND ENSURE YOU INCLUDE ALL REQUIREMENTS IN THE VIASPORT GUIDELINES AS PER BC HEALTH AUTHORITIES

## Managing Injuries

Employers are responsible for first aid at the workplace. First aid policy and procedures must be reviewed in the era of COVID-19 and communicated to all employees. A first aid risk assessment will help determine the required type of Exposure Control Plans (ECP), including control measures recommended by health authorities and regulatory bodies.

**New Worksafe BC resource for first aid protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic** <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/news-events/announcements/2020/June/new-resource-for-first-aid-protocols-during-covid-19-pandemic>

Ensure someone with first aid training is at the facility when clients are riding or participating in lessons. Ensure the person trained in first aid is up to date with all COVID-19 related first aid protocols. Discuss with local public health authorities if unsure of these protocols.

Set designated barn hours to ensure that nobody is in the barn alone in case there is an emergency or injury situation. Make sure COVID-19 supplies (disposable masks, gloves) are readily available for those assigned first aid duty and that there are extra masks, gloves etc. in case there is an injury. Clearly indicate where these supplies are located in the facility.

# OUTBREAK ACTION PLAN



The Purpose of the "Outbreak Action Plan" is to aid in the contact tracing of those individuals who may have come into direct or indirect contact with an infected individual. It is the responsibility of the entire equestrian community to ensure we are keeping accurate records of those individuals with whom we are coming into contact to help keep us all safe.

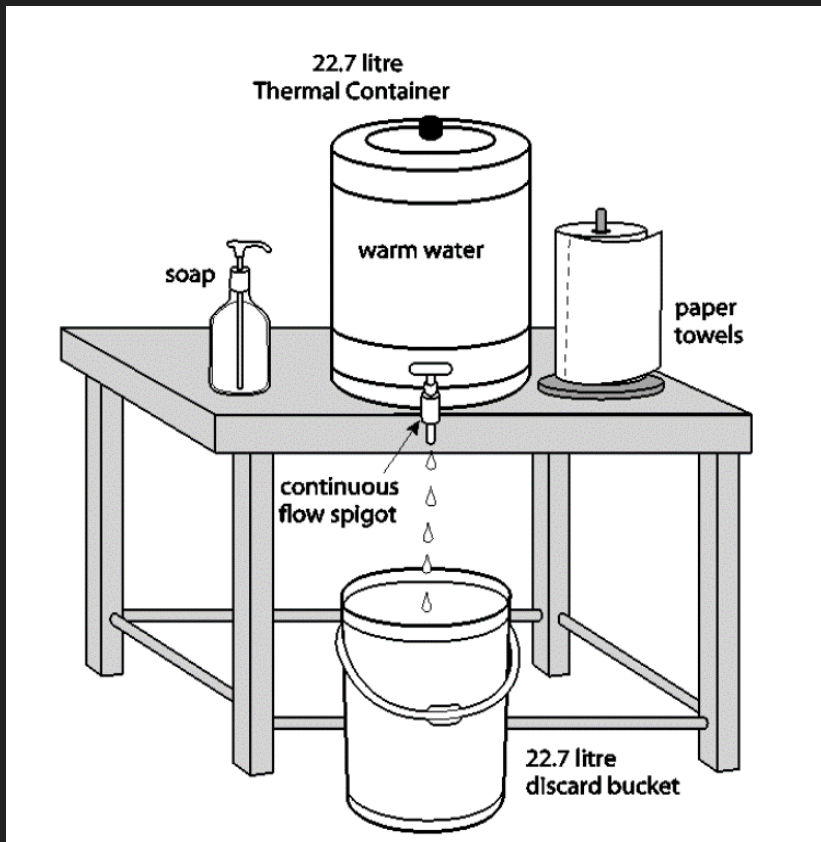
- All athletes & coaches attending training sessions must be active members of their club and/or Horse Council BC with current and up-to-date contact information on file with either the club, organizer or personal coach.
- Clubs, organizers or coaches are asked to keep record of the date of each activity held, along with a listing of all athletes who attended the session. Members are asked to keep record of the individuals they are training with.
- Any individuals experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, headache, or shortness of breath) must inform their coaches, event organizer or club personnel (via phone, text, or email) immediately.
- Any individual who has been told to self-isolate due to having come in contact with someone with symptoms of COVID-19 is not permitted to attend an organized activity and must inform their coach or club personnel (via phone, text, or email) immediately.
- If the affected individual had contact with any other athletes or coaches in the past 14 days, the coach or club personnel should inform other potentially affected individuals (taking care to keep the affected athlete's identity and medical information private) and ask those who have any symptoms to self-isolate at home.
- If a club or unattached coach has a member diagnosed with COVID-19 all in-person training must be discontinued for a period of 14 days.

# USE OF FACILITIES



- Talk to the facility owner and understand the capacity limits of the facility. Reference facility maximum capacity (WorkSafe BC).
- Work with the facility owner and understand their COVID Safety Plan requirements and what will be your responsibility as a user group.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) must be available at any facility and is to be worn by coach/safety monitor in case of injury where hands-on assistance is needed.
- Clubs, organizers and/or coaches should ensure that facilities have set schedules that allow for sports to meet municipal and provincial mandates for physical distancing and proper hygiene. (i.e. coordination between boarders, user groups and other clubs.)
- Clubs, organizers and/or coaches should ensure that facilities have posted appropriate signage outside entrance to the facility briefly outlining the physical distancing guidelines in place.
- Clubs, organizers and/or coaches should ensure that there is public notification of the training venue - signage posting of practice/group times when athletes will be training.
- Clubs, organizers and/or coaches should ensure that there is signage posted within facilities encouraging good handwashing, physical distancing and respiratory hygiene.

# SPORT PROGRAMING



- Stay current on the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) orders and limit group size including all personnel on site to meet the requirements. (currently 50)
- Look to reduce touch points.
- Focus on skill development and lower risk activities
- Ensure programing or class offerings can adhere to the PHO requirements for physical distancing, hygiene etc.
- Avoid physical contact.
- Make modifications to your program or event to meet the PHO requirements without impacting safety rules.
- The BC Government is asking people to stay close to home and avoid any travel between communities that is not essential. Keep your activities small and local.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



## BC'S RESTART PLAN

[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/bc-restart-plan?bcgovtm=20200514\\_GCPE\\_AM\\_COVID\\_9\\_ADW\\_BCGOV\\_EN\\_BC\\_TEXT](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/bc-restart-plan?bcgovtm=20200514_GCPE_AM_COVID_9_ADW_BCGOV_EN_BC_TEXT)

## VIASPORT RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES

<https://www.viasport.ca/sites/default/files/ReturntoSportGuidelines.pdf>

## VIASPORT RETURN TO SPORT RESOURCES AND TOOLS

<https://www.viasport.ca/return-sport-resources>

[FAQs](#) | [Key Messages](#) | [Return to Sport Activity Chart](#)

## VIASPORT COVID-19 SAFETY PLAN TEMPLATE AND CHECKLIST

[https://www.viasport.ca/sites/default/files/Appendix%20COVID-19\\_Safety\\_Plan.pdf?utm\\_source=viaSport+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=158f74a407-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2020\\_04\\_14\\_05\\_04\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_e001f69b1e-158f74a407-200044725](https://www.viasport.ca/sites/default/files/Appendix%20COVID-19_Safety_Plan.pdf?utm_source=viaSport+Newsletter&utm_campaign=158f74a407-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_04_14_05_04_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_e001f69b1e-158f74a407-200044725)

## BC PROVINCIAL HEALTH OFFICER ORDERS

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

## BC CENTRE FOR DISEASE CONTROL COVID-19 RESOURCES

<http://covid-19.bccdc.ca/>

## AGSAFE

<https://agsafebc.ca/tools/emergency-planning-resources/covid-19-resources/>

## HORSE COUNCIL BC RETURN TO SPORT PAGE

<https://hcbc.ca/return-to-sport/>

For non-medical information about COVID-19 you can also call 1-888-COVID19 (1-888-268-4319),

7:30am-8pm, 7 days a week.



# DISCLAIMER

Each facility, business, club is unique and will need to carefully consider their own circumstances. It is important to note that although Horse Council BC is providing these tools and resources to the sector we are NOT an authority on Covid-19 disease spread. We are not offering this document as a substitute for legal or insurance advice. There are potential health, liability and insurance exposures you should consider carefully before resuming activities at your facility or club. We recommend you seek professional advice to ensure you mitigate your exposure and understand your risks. Anyone using the HCBC Return to Equestrian Sport Guidelines does so at their own risk. Horse Council BC shall not be responsible for any loss or damage of any kind arising directly or indirectly from the use of the guidelines including, without limitation, reliance on the completeness or accuracy of the information provided.

The sport specific guidelines provided by Horse Council BC are meant to supplement the requirements and recommendations from BC Health Authorities and the viaSPORT guidelines and should not be used as a standalone document.

Information is changing quickly, as we move forward it will be important to keep updated on the [BC Provincial Health Officer Orders](#).



# HORSE COUNCIL BRITISH COLUMBIA

[WWW.HCBC.CA](http://www.hcbc.ca)

[hcbc.ca/return-to-sport/](http://hcbc.ca/return-to-sport/)

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Horse Council BC's vision statement "a British Columbia where quality opportunities to participate in equestrian sport and recreation are available to ALL".