

Hot Weather Guidance



This guidance has been written to help organisers and competitors make informed decisions about how to keep everyone safe during hot temperatures.

Please use the table below as a guide to know when to cancel, and when additional provision should be put in place.

| Forecast Temperature Range | Action Required | Strenuous activity, like XC | Show jumping or similar | Dressage or similar | Comments |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| 38° or above | Cancel | Cancel | Cancel | Cancel | This is above blood temperature and so the event should be cancelled. |
| 33°-38° | If no shade, consider cancelling or make provision for shade. Start earlier if possible. Provide water for volunteers and horses. | Consider reducing course length, time allowances etc. Provide intensive cooling* at finish. | Consider reducing number of rounds. Provide cooling at finish | Provide cooling at finish | Proceed with caution, carry out a heat risk assessment – what are risks, and how will they be mitigated? As soon as it goes above 33, think carefully about continuing. |
| 28°-33° | Must have cooling capacity. Provide water for volunteers and horses. | Provide intensive cooling* at finish. | Provide cooling at finish | Provide cooling at finish | Carry out a heat risk assessment – what are risks, and how will they be mitigated? |
| 23°-28° | Monitor carefully | Provide cooling at finish | Consider providing cooling at finish | Consider providing cooling at finish | Ensure provision for heat is included in your risk assessment, monitor temperatures on the day. |
| Below 23° | No additional action required. | Provide normal cooling | Provide normal cooling | Provide normal cooling | Ensure provision for heat is included in your risk assessment, monitor temperatures on the day. |

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Event Organisers should think carefully about continuing in extreme temperatures of above 28°, a heat risk assessment should be carried out, looking at all aspects of the day, and how you can best mitigate the risk for horses, participants, their supporters, volunteers and officials. Shade and hydration should be provided, if you cannot provide this, you should cancel.

Travel to and from the competition is also an important factor to consider. Competitors should think carefully about their journey and ensure their transport is well ventilated and it is essential that water is carried while travelling and offer it regularly during longer journeys.

Everyone should be reminded to ensure their vehicles are thoroughly checked and well-maintained. This includes checking coolant levels, having appropriate breakdown cover in place, and planning the route in advance, taking into account any potential delays and identifying safe stopping places along the route.

Competitors should be encouraged to use their judgment to decide if their horse is well prepared for the conditions, taking into account the heat, how well the horse has acclimatised, and the length of the journey, their age, type, level of fitness.

It is sensible to contact competitors prior to the event, offering advice and guidance, but also tell them what provision the organisers have put in place to mitigate the risks. This will hopefully help them to make informed decisions about whether to attend the event or not.

Here is some general advice on prevention, management and identification of heat stroke in both horses and humans.

Helping to prevent heat stress for horses and ponies

- Horses should have constant access to water, both to drink and for cooling.
- Use electrolytes before and after competing.
- Stand in the shade whenever possible.
- Do not cover with rugs.
- Keep tack off for as long as possible, remove quickly after being ridden.
- Monitor the respiratory rate before, during and after exercise.
- Use a recovery or other wet mash type feed that is well watered to aid water and electrolyte intake.
- Soak hay, taking care not to allow it to go rancid in the heat.

How to cool horses

- Cooling with water can be done, on arrival, before being ridden, and straight after riding.
- Cooling should be done by applying cool/cold water all over the horse/pony. Do not scrape off the water.

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- *Intensive, prolonged cooling should be done by throwing buckets of cool/cold water over the horse/pony, this should be done after all strenuous exercise. Cooling should not be stopped until the water on the horse remains cool.
- Keep the horse moving to aid evaporation of the water.

Signs of Heat Stroke

Early Signs of Heat Stroke:

- Fast or heavy breathing, without improvement.
- Excessive sweating.
- Increased heart rate.
- Tiredness or weakness.
- Muscle stiffness or shaking.

Advanced Warning Signs:

- Raised rectal temperature of above 38.
- Lack of sweating.
- Staggering, wobbling, or loss of coordination.
- Dark or discoloured gums.
- Laboured or difficult breathing.
- Attempting to lie down or collapse.

If your horse shows any of these signs, act immediately: Move them to a shaded area, begin active cooling with water, keep them walking, and contact a vet for advice.

Helping to prevent Heat Stress for Competitors, Supporters, Volunteers and Officials.

- Drink plenty of water before, during and after the heat exposure.
- Use a cap, sun hat, or other appropriate head covering when not riding.
- Wear loose, lightweight clothing.
- Judges and Officials are encouraged to allow jackets to be removed.
- Stay in the shade where possible.
- Use a high factor sunscreen, remembering to re-apply throughout the day.

Always put Welfare ahead of personal gain.