

CORONA VIRUS

**Some observations and suggestions from the Horse Welfare Committee
Dr Michelle Eastwood, Margot Bulger and Angus Malcolm.**

Of course, while we should not panic, we also should not be complacent.

Current suggested procedures and considerations:

1. Wash your hands regularly with liquid soap and water for 20-30 seconds, (or alcohol-based hand rubs if hands are not visibly dirty). Dry off completely and try not to touch your face (but good luck with that one!)
2. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or flexed elbow when coughing or sneezing. Bag or bin used tissues immediately, then repeat step one for those hands.
3. Avoid being in physical contact at a distance of 1 meter or less for more than 15 minutes with anyone who has symptoms such as fever, a cough, sore throat, fatigue, and shortness of breath. But if you know somebody who is self-isolating, that doesn't mean you can't be neighbourly and pop a note under their door or send a message to ask if there is anything they need that you can help with... we're all in this together after all.

If it's a mate in self-isolation, take the time to make a call and let them know they're not on their own - two weeks in only your own company can be pretty demoralising.

4. Stay home if you are unwell. Don't attend public events, especially if you've travelled internationally in the previous two weeks. Social distancing means not being within a metre of others in your household for 15 minutes or more.

At this stage, facemasks are only recommended for people who have recently returned from mainland China, Iran, Italy, or South Korea who are unwell.

Face masks are more about reducing the risk that you will spread disease if you are sick, and less about protecting you from getting sick. So if you don't have symptoms, a face-mask is not necessary.

RDA has a quite unique position with regard to the impact CoVID 19 would have on our participants and volunteers as many of them are in the most vulnerable categories (immuno-compromised, older, existing respiratory issues, unable to undertake appropriate

hygiene practices outside the home, or have other co-morbidities which make them more vulnerable) and could be quite seriously impacted should they be exposed to the virus.

It is of course, up to the individual or the carer to make the decision about the level of risk they wish to expose themselves to, however we do need to provide information such as the above, to volunteers and to participants and carers, to allow them to decide what is best for them as an individual or as a centre.

Each centre should be holding discussions about who would be available to care for the horses (feed, water, shelter, normal husbandry such as farriery) should centres need to restrict access to the site and or their volunteers including horse carers cannot attend.

Careful consideration should be given to feed requirements should there be a problem with supply – particularly for those Centre's whose horses are fully hand fed.

Additionally, to assist in the case of trace-back and outbreak management, coaches, whips and staff should ensure they are maintaining attendance lists of riders/drivers, volunteers and carers daily.

Cleaning of shared helmets and frequently touched items should be cleaned after each use. Common habits such as chewing on helmet straps or placing items in mouths should be discouraged even more vigorously than normal.

Consideration should be given to cleaning reins after each rider/driver has completed their lesson, particularly if they have been coughing, sneezing or appeared unwell, and similarly lead ropes may need washing between classes if volunteers are unwell.

Providing hand sanitiser for use before and after classes for both clients and volunteers would be ideal where possible.

Reputational management will of course drive many decisions, often it is better to be safe than sorry, and should a volunteer or client become unwell, and a diagnosis of suspected corona virus be made, there is the need for this to be reported, to health authorities, the board and to those who may have been in contact.

Our (RDA) situation is somewhat unique due to the vulnerability of our clients and volunteers, and many people may themselves choose to limit their personal risk by not attending normal activities.

These choices need to be respected and supported. We should, however, provide information on measures to be taken, and allow each centre (who know their clients and volunteer demographic best) to judge the situation for themselves.

Centre's in higher density areas or areas where cases have been confirmed, and those seeing large volumes of people are at higher risk and should plan accordingly.

Centres will need to remain flexible - the situation is very fluid and dynamic, and will change quite quickly, so keeping up to date with the messages passed on from reliable sources such as the Dept of health <https://www.health.gov.au/>

AND IF YOUR HORSES OR PETS NEED A VET and you have recently travelled and your horse or pet needs to see a vet go to <http://pet.lc/z2KoeSQ> for more information.

