

For immediate release – 23 March 2020

BEF update: Coronavirus (COVID-19) advice and help available for equine industry businesses and employers

The British Equestrian Federation (BEF) would like to thank the equestrian community for their current support during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. These are unprecedented times for society in general and we all need to play a part in helping to manage and restrict the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). The Government's messaging for social distancing, avoiding unnecessary travel and shielding is growing ever stronger in light of some individuals choosing not to adhere to the guidance. As such, our advice for the **cessation of all organised equine activity** remains in place in order to support Government recommendations to stay at home wherever possible.

Organised activity includes traveling your horse for lessons or schooling, having a trainer to your yard, having a lesson at a riding centre and riding in large groups. However, we actively encourage enjoying your horse in the fresh air due to its benefits to your wellbeing and mental health, and those responsible for the care of a horse can still travel to care for and exercise them, either in an arena (preferably outdoors) or on a hack, provided you strictly follow the current [Public Health England guidelines](#) when visiting. If you keep horses at home, please keep up with the information on [hygiene](#). It's also important to be aware that health services in the UK is currently stretched to capacity, so consider avoiding any activities that might carry an increased risk of injury, such as riding a fresh or young horse.

Advice and support for equestrian businesses and employees

We recognise that this advice has far-reaching implications for a number of our stakeholder groups, and that businesses and individuals will be hit financially. The UK Government has announced an initial £330 billion of help through number of measures to help, which we've summarised as a guide to help those in need access the assistance available.

Vital links

[Gov.uk: COVID-19: support for businesses](#)

[GOV.UK: COVID-19: guidance for employees](#)

[HM Treasury: How to access government financial support if you or your business has been affected by COVID-19](#)

Helpful link for small businesses and those who are self-employed

[National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses](#)

Businesses and employees

For all UK businesses, there is support through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme where all employers can access support to continue to pay part of their employees' salaries for those who would have otherwise been laid off during this crisis. On 20 March, the following measures were announced/expanded upon:

- The introduction of a new job retention scheme will cover up to 80% of wage costs up to a cap of £2,500 per month, backdated to 1 March for a period of three months or longer, if needed, for small businesses, charities and not-for-profit organisations. Grants due to be available to business within weeks. [More info is available from GOV.UK](#)

- The Corona Business Interruption Loan Scheme is now be available for loans up to £5million for SMEs and will now be interest free for 12 months (was 6 months) – more info and how to apply is available [here](#).
- Deferring the next quarter of VAT through to the end of June (those payments can now be paid at the end of the financial year)
- Statutory Sick Pay relief package for small or medium-size businesses who are paying sick pay to employees off due to COVID-19
- HMRC Time To Pay arrangements can be put in for a time-limited deferral period

We have had confirmation from the Sport and Recreation Alliance that riding schools, livery yards and competition centres fall under the umbrella of those businesses considered to be ‘for assembly and leisure’ – provided they are normally **open to the public** – and as such are eligible for the help currently on offer from the Government:

- 100% business rates relief for the year 2020/21
- Businesses in these sectors with a rateable value of under £15,000 will receive a grant of £10,000
- Businesses in these sectors with a rateable value of between £15,001 and £51,000 will receive a grant of £25,000

Business rates and cash grants

England

- Expanding the 100% business rates holiday for the next 12 months to cover all retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in England – not just those up to £51K rateable value
- Providing a £25,000 cash grant to retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in smaller premises, with a rateable value below £51K
- Increasing the proposed £3,000 cash grant to a £10,000 cash grant for 700,000 small businesses (those eligible for Small Business Rate Relief). [N.B. Potentially, this will also apply for those eligible for rural rates relief]

Scotland

- 100% relief rates holiday for businesses in hospitality, leisure and retail for a period of 12 months. Grants will also available for Scottish companies in this sector
- A £25,000 grant for businesses in hospitality, leisure and retail with a rateable value between £18,000 and £51,000
- Small firms receiving the small business bonus or rural relief will be eligible for a £10,000 grant. Businesses will be also be able to request to defer all payment
- All non-domestic properties will get 1.6% relief, reversing the poundage change

You can find additional details on the Scottish Government’s package of reliefs and grants [here](#).

Northern Ireland

- A three-month rates holiday for all businesses, which effectively means a further 25% discount off your bill
- The issuing of rates bills will be deferred from April until June
- Small firms who are eligible for the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme will receive a £10,000 grant

- A £25,000 grant to companies in the hospitality, tourism and retail sectors with a rateable value from £15,000 to £51,000

Wales

- A 12-month rates relief for businesses in retail, leisure and hospitality
- A £25,000 grant for retail, leisure and hospitality businesses with a rateable value of between £12,000 and £51,000
- Shops and leisure and hospitality businesses with a rateable value of £51,000 or less will receive 100% business rates relief, administered through their local authority
- Firms eligible for Small Business Rates Relief with a rateable value of £12,000 or less will receive a £10,000 grant

You can find additional details online on the [Business Wales website](#).

If you can't find your rateable value, you can [search](#) for it using your postcode on GOV.UK.

The Equestrian Employers Association has [further advice](#) on equine businesses and their employees.

Self-employed/freelance individuals

Some measures have been brought in to assist those who are self-employed or work in a freelance capacity, but further measures are expected this week:

- A new-style Employment and Support Allowance will be payable for people directly affected by COVID-19 or self-isolating according to Government advice, available from the first day of sickness, rather than the eighth day
- The standard allowance on Universal Credit will increase over the next 12 months by £1,000
- Suspension of the minimum income floor for the self-employed, meaning they can now access Universal Credit in full at a rate equivalent to Statutory Sick Pay for employees
- The next self-assessment payments have been deferred to January 2021 for the self-employed
- HMRC Time To Pay arrangements can be put in for a time-limited deferral period for payments

For grooms in this category, the British Grooms Association has some [further advice](#) and will update with any developments.

HMRC

For both businesses and individuals, the HMRC has set up a dedicated COVID-19 helpline to help those in need on 0800 0159 559, in addition to other HMRC phone contact numbers. Opening hours are 8am to 8pm on Monday to Friday, and 8am to 4pm on Saturday.

Further updates

We are continuing to closely work with DEFRA via the British Horse Council in a bid to provide any further advice and guidance on the restrictions in place currently, in addition to any future measures that may come into force generally or particularly around equestrian activity, including the day-to-day care and exercise of horses.