

## COVID-19 protocols: Returning to GB from non-exempt countries

Please note, this document will be updated continually as new information and questions arise. Updated sections will be highlighted in the headings below.

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## **Section 1 – Overview and context**

Current UK Government travel regulations require anyone returning from a country not covered by the [travel corridor exemption](#) to self-isolate for 14 days on arrival in Great Britain.

However, in line with UK Government guidance, elite sportspeople and essential support staff (i.e. jockeys, trainers and stable staff) returning from competition in a non-exempt country may be [eligible for exemption](#) from the 14-day self-isolation, subject to applying for and receiving written evidence from a national governing body (i.e. BHA).

To help safeguard the domestic racing industry from risk associated with international travel, the BHA has [published a protocol](#) for its licensed and registered jockeys, trainers and members of stable staff returning from competition in non-exempt countries. The protocol can be read [here](#).

The [protocol](#) gives eligible participants the option to apply for exemption status, which would require those returning from a non-exempt country to self-isolate for at least 7 days while undertaking a laboratory testing programme. This offers an alternative to the 14-day self-isolation period.

Participants seeking exemption status will need to complete the [BHA online application form prior to travelling](#), which asks for information about travel plans, accommodation arrangements in the non-exempt country, and self-isolation details in GB.

They will also need to agree to complete two COVID-19 PCR Antigen Tests on return to GB – one as soon as possible following arrival; the second seven days after return (24 hours should be allowed for test results) – and remain in self-isolation until negative test results are received and verified by the BHA Medical Department.

### **Applying for exemption status – the key steps**

Participants planning to travel to a non-exempt country and seeking exemption status on return to Great Britain must complete the following steps:

**Before** travelling to a non-exempt country:

- Apply for exemption status by [completing this online form](#), which asks for information about your travel plans, accommodation arrangements when in the non-exempt country, and self-isolation details for when you return to GB.
- The form also asks about whether you have made your PCR Antigen testing arrangements for arrival back in Great Britain (see *Section 5 – COVID-19 testing*) or need assistance, which the Medical Department can provide.
- You may be asked to provide additional information, as requested by the BHA Medical / Integrity Department, as part of the risk assessment process – this may include further written details or a phone / video interview.

- Successful applications will be provided with written evidence for presentation to UK Border Force on return to GB.

On return to GB from a non-exempt country:

- Email the [BHA Medical Department](#) to confirm that you have returned using the exemption and confirm details of your PCR Antigen Testing arrangements. The BHA Medical Department will make a request to the accredited laboratory to arrange testing if you have not already made alternative arrangements (see *Section 5 – COVID-19 testing*).
- Self-isolate (see *Section 4 – Self-isolation*) until the 2<sup>nd</sup> PCR Antigen Test has been reviewed and the BHA CMA confirms that you are no longer required to do so.

More detail on each of these steps is provided in the FAQs below and in the [protocol document](#). Please ensure you have read this in full and completed the necessary actions before travelling.

## **Section 2 – Exempt and non-exempt countries and territories**

### **Which racing jurisdictions are currently non-exempt (i.e. require isolation on return)?**

The list of countries that are currently non-exempt from government self-isolation requirements can be found [here](#). You will also need to self-isolate if you visited or made a [transit stop](#) in a country or territory that is non-exempt.

Please note that countries and territories can be taken off or added to this exempt list at any time, and at short notice. Please continue to check this list if you are planning to travel.

### **Which racing jurisdictions are currently exempt from 14-day isolation?**

The list of countries that the government has assessed as no longer presenting an unacceptably high risk to British people travelling abroad can be found [here](#).

## **Section 3 – Elite athlete / support staff exemption from self-isolation requirements**

### **Who can qualify for elite sportsperson / essential support staff exemption?**

Jockeys are eligible for exemption as elite athletes. Trainers and stable staff are also eligible for exemption, as essential support staff for equine athletes.

### **If I travel to a non-exempt country solely to participate at a race meeting, do I still need to self-isolate on my return to GB?**

Yes, anyone travelling home from a non-exempt country must self-isolate on arrival in GB, in line with [UK Government guidance](#) and [BHA protocols](#). Domestic elite sportspersons and essential support staff (Trainers, Jockeys and Registered Stable Staff) are therefore required to self-isolate for either:

- 14-days from arrival in GB, if not applying for exemption under the BHA protocols
- A minimum of 7 days, if meeting the BHA's requirements for exemption, which includes the completion of two PCR Antigen tests. Anyone applying for exemption must obtain written evidence from the BHA prior to travelling to a non-exempt country.

**I have been on holiday in a non-exempt country, do I have to self-isolate when I return?**

Yes. If you are returning from a holiday in a non-exempt country, you will not qualify for elite sportsperson exemption status and therefore will be required to self-isolate in accordance with [government guidelines](#).

**Section 4 – Self-isolation****What is self-isolation?**

Self-isolation means that you will not be allowed to leave the place where you are staying for the first 14 days you are in GB. Full details on how to self-isolate can be found on the [UK Government website](#).

**Can I go to a yard or ride out whilst self-isolating?**

No, when you return to Great Britain, you must self-isolate in accordance with UK [Government requirements](#). You must not leave the place where you are staying, unless it is for the limited circumstances that are listed.

**I must self-isolate and I live on the yard / in shared yard accommodation with someone who works in racing, is this a problem?**

You must self-isolate in accordance with UK [Government requirements](#), which state:

*“The people you’re staying with do not need to stay at home, unless they travelled with you. If you’re staying in a hotel or guest house, you must stay away from others who didn’t travel with you, so it’s important that you don’t use shared areas such as bars, restaurants, health clubs and sports facilities. Stay 2 metres apart from other people staying there at all times.*

*It’s important to avoid as much contact with other people as possible in your home in order to reduce the risk of transmitting coronavirus. You should stay in a well-ventilated room with a window to the outside that can be opened, separate from other people in your home”.*

**What if I don’t self-isolate on return?**

The BHA’s resumption to racing under [Covid-19 protocols](#) has been agreed to safeguard everyone’s health and wellbeing during the current and continuing COVID-19 situation, to ensure that racing can continue in a safe and appropriate manner.

By not self-isolating or following the guidance in place, you will be putting yourself, your colleagues, and other industry participants at risk. If you return immediately to work in a yard or on the racecourse, you risk potentially transmitting the virus, which could result in everyone with whom you’ve been in contact being asked to self-isolate for 14 days.

Any information received which indicates that guidelines have been breached will be reported to the appropriate public health department and be considered by the BHA. Any breaches of government and/or BHA requirements (including BHA Rules and protocols) would result in disciplinary action (and reciprocation if regulated with another jurisdiction).

In accordance with [UK Government guidance](#), you may also be fined £1,000.

## **Section 5 – COVID-19 testing**

### **What COVID-19 test do I need to take on return?**

You need to undertake a PCR Antigen Swab Test from an accredited laboratory. The test checks for the presence of the virus in your system in a swab sample from your nose/throat and is the most appropriate test during the earliest stages of the virus.

An IgG Antibody test is not an acceptable alternative.

### **Who arranges the PCR Antigen test?**

The BHA Medical Department will make a request on your behalf to your chosen accredited laboratory so that testing arrangements can be made, unless you already have alternative medical arrangements.

### **Where can I get a PCR Antigen Test?**

There are several companies offering PCR Antigen testing in the UK. Samples are either self-collected or collected by a health care professional and then sent by post or courier to the laboratory. The sooner the sample is received by the laboratory the quicker the result will be available.

The BHA Medical Department is working to identify providers. Currently, the following have been identified as able to assist:

- TDL Laboratories <https://www.tdlpathology.com/>
- Qured <https://qured.com/>
- Viapath <http://www.viapath.co.uk/>

Please contact the BHA [Medical Department](#) if you need assistance in arranging a test, which will depend on your location and the urgency of the test.

If you wish to make your own arrangements with another provider, we ask that you check in advance with the BHA [Medical Department](#) to ensure the arrangements will meet required standards.

### **How much will each PCR Antigen Test cost?**

Each PCR Antigen tests typically cost between £65 and £150. You may have to pay extra for the sample to be taken or if you choose a courier instead of postal delivery.

### **Who pays for the testing?**

All testing is at the expense of individuals or their employers.

### **Do I need to arrange the test before I travel?**

You must have contacted the accredited laboratory and received confirmation that they can provide the service to enable you to meet the requirements of the protocol. This needs to be done before you travel.

**How soon will I get the PCR Antigen test result?**

Once swabs are received at the laboratory, the test usually takes between 12 and 24 hours to return a result, though it is possible that you may wait several days.

**Why do I have to wait 7 days after arriving back in GB to have the second test?**

PCR testing will detect the virus once it has developed and you begin to be infectious. This takes on average 6.5 days so an early negative test after exposure may give false reassurance. This period starts on arrival back in GB.

**Can I ride on the day I receive my second negative test, if I receive it in time, or do I have to wait until the following day?**

You can only ride or stop self-isolating once you have received a negative second test and have been declared fit to ride by the BHA's Medical Department.

**Can I take my first test before I leave a non-exempt country?**

No, you must have arrived home in GB before undertaking your first test.

**Can I take an NHS Test to meet exemption requirements?**

Not when seeking elite sportsperson / support staff exemptions. You should only get an NHS test if you meet the criteria set out on the [NHS website](#). These include, having symptoms yourself, living with someone who has symptoms, or if you are told to get a test by the NHS or your local council.

**What do I do if my test is positive?**

Follow [NHS guidance](#), and notify the [BHA CMA](#) and your employer immediately.

**Section 6 – Breaching the protocol****What happens if I do not follow the BHA requirements?**

Any information received which indicates that guidelines have been breached will be reported to the appropriate public health department and be considered by the BHA. Any breaches of government and/or BHA requirements (including BHA Rules and protocols) may result in disciplinary action.

**Section 7 - Help and advice****Where can I go for help and advice?**

Please contact the COVID-19 Helpdesk, and your query will be directed to the appropriate team.

- Phone: 0207 152 0110
- Email: [covidhelpdesk@britishhorseracing.com](mailto:covidhelpdesk@britishhorseracing.com)