

Please note this is a record of previous FAQs in relation to the initial suspension of racing, financial support for the industry and other matters. For the latest FAQs relating to the resumption of racing, please visit the coronavirus page of the BHA website.

Section 1 - Initial period of suspension: 18 March – 30 April (last updated 9.4.20)

Why was racing suspended?

The decision to suspend horseracing in Britain until the end of April was taken by the BHA Board, in consultation with senior leaders from all parts of the sport and informed by medical advice, following in-depth discussion and very serious consideration.

Our first duty is to the health of our participants, our customers and the general public. By stopping racing, we can free up medical resources, doctors and ambulances – be they private sector or NHS – to assist in the national effort to fight coronavirus. We can also support racing industry staff and participants as they face up to the personal challenges ahead and care for their own families.

How long will it be suspended?

All horseracing in Britain was suspended with effect from Wednesday 18 March 2020, initially up to the end of April. The decision will be kept under constant review. On [2 April](#), it was announced that Jump racing will be postponed until at least 1 July 2020 to allow more clarity and certainty for the owners and trainers of Jump horses. British racing's leaders will review the plans for racing to resume in the week commencing 13 April as confirmed [here](#).

Why until the end of April?

This is a rapidly evolving situation and a degree of informed judgement was required in setting what is a provisional date. The timescale was based on the earliest possible date when the pressure on vital medical resources and restrictions on mass gatherings might ease sufficiently, in order that we can resume the race programme. This is in line with the decision of other major sports such as football.

Could the suspension extend beyond April?

No one, including the government, is able to say with any degree of certainty how long the current public health restrictions will stay in place. It is possible that racing will remain either fully or partially suspended, or with restrictions in place, beyond this initial date. While we hope this does not prove to be the case, we are planning for all scenarios, i.e. to manage the challenges and hardships caused by a longer suspension, whilst also ensuring we have plans in place to resume racing at the earliest possible opportunity. British racing's leaders will review the plans for racing to resume in the week commencing 13 April as confirmed [here](#).

When will we know if it's likely to be a longer suspension?

We will continue to review the situation. If a longer suspension (either full or partial) is likely, we will do our best to provide as much advance notice of this as possible, to assist people in their planning.

Why aren't we continuing to race behind closed doors?

On Monday 16 March, the UK Government unveiled a [range of measures](#) to tackle coronavirus, including the withdrawal of support for mass gatherings with emergency workers, more home working where possible, and a request to avoid non-essential social contact. It was clear following this announcement that the decision to suspend racing had to be taken to free up doctors, ambulances and other medical resources and support the health and social care sector during this period of significant pressure.

Why were Ireland able to continue temporarily behind closed doors, while British racing is fully suspended?

The Coronavirus situation varies from country and it is for each racing jurisdiction to decide upon the best course of action for their particular circumstances. Throughout this process, British racing's senior leaders have been liaising with, and adhering very closely to, advice from the UK Government, as well as following additional requirements put in place by the Scottish Government. Similarly, Horse Racing Ireland consulted with the Irish Government and adhered to its advice.

Why would racing have an impact on emergency services? Does it use NHS or private ambulances?

Ambulances are in attendance at all race meetings and this is a regulatory requirement to ensure the safety and care of participants. While ambulances are privately hired, in some cases they are hired from the NHS. This is in contrast to Ireland, where ambulances are provided by the Order of Malta, which are not generally used by the Irish National Ambulance Service. Irish Racing has made it clear, however, that its medical facilities and personnel will be available for the Irish Government to use if necessary.

However, more significant than the ambulances is the fact that jockeys injured on a racecourse are often taken to NHS Accident & Emergency departments in the first instance, and in some cases may require further hospital treatment. We did not want to place an unavoidable burden on the NHS and its hard-pressed staff until the situation is clearer. We also have a duty of care to the sport's participants and a need to ensure they receive optimum medical care.

Was racing slow to respond, e.g. should the Cheltenham Festival have gone ahead?

Over the past few weeks, we have taken great care to follow government guidance. The government itself has been clear about the need to act proportionately and we have been in regular, direct contact with them.

Some sports went beyond this when they started to see their own players and staff become affected. We were not aware of similar cases in racing at that time. The government advice before

and during Cheltenham was that mass gatherings were not a high area of risk, provided hygiene measures were in place and observed. The DCMS Secretary of State made clear it was right for Cheltenham to go ahead.

Were we too quick to suspend racing, e.g. couldn't we have continued to race behind closed doors, as in Ireland, at least for a while longer?

In the light of the government's announcement on Monday 16 March, we took account of the potential burden on the emergency services and healthcare system of continuing to race, as well as potential negative impacts on the health, safety and care of participants.

Who made the decision to suspend racing? Was it an instruction from Government?

The decision was ultimately taken by the BHA Board, which is composed of independent members and representatives of the sport's tripartite governance (racecourses, horsemen and BHA). In making its decision, the BHA Board was informed by wider industry views from the Members' Committee, as well as the views of medical advisers employed by the BHA and the Racecourse Association.

The government did not explicitly instruct us to suspend racing, just as it has not given explicit instruction in other areas. However, its position on both mass gatherings and activities that impact on emergency and healthcare services was made very clear, both in statements made by government on 16 March, and in our subsequent conversations with them.

Was the decision unanimous?

As in most committee-based discussions, a range of individual views were expressed, both in the Members' Committee and the BHA Board, but ultimately collective industry responsibility for the decision applies. Having made this decision, the industry will now work together to minimise the impacts and to ensure that we are ready to resume racing at the earliest possible opportunity.

Section 2 – Extension to the suspension of racing beyond 30 April (last updated 15.4.20)

Why was the suspension extended?

The suspension of racing, which is due to finish at the end of April, was extended after a decision by the Board of the British Horseracing Authority [on 15 April](#). Racing stopped on March 18 before the government introduced the current lockdown measures to protect essential emergency services and the health and safety of the public. The government has indicated publicly that it will announce that the lockdown restrictions will continue.

How long will the suspension last?

It is not possible currently to give a definite date when racing will return. Our plans continue to allow for a resumption in May, if that is possible. We assume it would be behind closed doors only,

at a point when the safety of participants can be assured and the pressure on the health service allows. Tough biosecurity measures would be in place to keep any risks to a minimum.

The BHA has been working with trainers, racecourses and other participants to develop a phased plan for resumption which will allow the sport to transition back to its normal fixture list later in the year. We remain in constant contact with government and are ready to respond quickly.

Why have you not set a fixed period of suspension like you did last time?

The BHA has not set a new date for ending the suspension but plans are in place so that the sport is ready to resume as soon as is possible and appropriate in consultation with government.

Who made the decision to further suspend racing?

The decision was made by the BHA Board following input from the racing industry's Corona Virus Steering Group and British Racing's Members Committee.

Section 3 - Planning & financial (last updated 17.4.20)

What is the economic impact on racing of the shutdown?

Racing is using the most recent information on the commercial revenues and employment generated by the industry to assess the impact. A wide-ranging submission to government outlining the impact of the shutdown and proposing areas for potential help has been submitted.

Was an economic impact assessment done before the decision to suspend was made?

This work had started prior to the decision, as we had initially anticipated a period during which racing took place behind closed doors. The situation escalated rapidly, however, and it was not possible to complete an accurate or complete assessment before the decision was made. However, the potential economic impact was, and remains, a significant consideration in all decision-making.

What is being done to support the racing industry during and after this period?

Racing leaders published a detailed plan coordinated by the industry group set up to tackle COVID-19 on [30 March](#) with the first in a series of weekly updates published on [3 April](#). Its initial, primary focus is to meet the immediate needs of individuals facing hardship and working on a financial response in light of the suspension of racing. A range of working groups have been established, details of which were published in a statement issued by the BHA, on behalf of the Industry Group, on [19 March](#).

A £22 million support package for the industry from the Levy Board and Racing Foundation was [announced on 17 April](#).

Is racing lobbying government, as other industries are?

Senior executives from the racing industry are considering all the options for financial support after the suspension of racing, including the proposals announced by the UK Chancellor, Rishi Sunak. The racing industry team has been working urgently to understand how employers and businesses in racing can access financial assistance from the various government packages announced – further information which can be read [here](#).

A detailed case to the UK government outlining what further economic support is required to support the industry in addition to these measures has now been submitted.

The BHA Public Affairs team, on behalf of the industry, is constantly engaged with key Government departments – as it has been throughout the development of the coronavirus pandemic in recent months – to ensure they are aware of the practical issues that have already been encountered. All this will assist in enabling the industry to put forward a request for government support.

You can read more on the work being carried out on this in the BHA Coronavirus Operational Plan published on 30 March, which is available [here](#).

Will the government provide financial support for racing and/or its people?

Yes. All businesses and individuals are able to access Government support packages, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Government-backed loans and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme. A useful summary of the available support from Government is available [here](#). Our statements in response to the Chancellor's announcements of 20 March and 27 March respectively are available [here](#) and [here](#).

British racing continues to make representations on behalf of the industry on access to all forms of relief announced to date. If you experience any issues in accessing reliefs then please let your Membership Body know in the first instance, where if necessary this will be raised with Government.

Will Levy funds be available to help relieve financial pressures on the sport during the shutdown?

On 17 April, Racing unveiled [a £22m support package](#) from both the Horserace Betting Levy Board and Racing Foundation to support the industry. This is designed to help its people, businesses and communities as they battle through the COVID crisis in a manageable and sustainable way.

Section 4 - Staffing and redeployment of people (last updated 17.4.20)

Will people in racing lose their jobs?

We are very much aware that, with a cessation of racing, cash flow and income in the medium term will very quickly become an issue for many of those who work in racing.

The focus of leaders across the racing industry has been to pull together the financial requirements of the various constituent parts of our industry, so that the clearest and most compelling case can

be made for government for additional financial support above that already announced by Government. This case has now been submitted. A detailed operational plan outlining the key workstreams for the industry was published on [30 March](#) and the first in a series of weekly updates was published on [3 April](#). A £22 million support package for the industry from the Levy Board and Racing Foundation was [announced on 17 April](#).

We understand that much of the racing industry faces a period of uncertainty and worry. Racing's constituent parts are working together to do everything they can to minimise the financial impact of the current situation.

Many people in racing are self-employed? What support will they receive?

The industry team is considering the issues affecting self-employed workers in the industry, including jockeys. On 27 March measures specifically to assist the self-employed were announced by the Chancellor and welcomed in [this statement](#) issued by the BHA and PJA.

Racing will now liaise with Government to gain an understanding of the full details of the proposals. In addition, the information will be used to help determine where racing's own funds will be best allocated to support its workforce.

Support is available through Racing Welfare and we encourage anyone looking for more information to speak to their representative body or the BHA if they are concerned.

Will people be compensated for any loss of income while racing is suspended?

Racing's leaders have submitted a detailed case to UK government calling outlining what further economic support is required to the industry above the support already announced. However, the coronavirus crisis is affecting all parts of life and business in Britain and racing has been warned not to expect immediate answers from government.

In the interim, businesses and the self-employed across the industry can access the assistance packages announced by the chancellor Rishi Sunak, with further information available [here](#).

A £22 million support package for the industry from the Levy Board and Racing Foundation was [announced on 17 April](#).

Will people in racing whose usual work is disrupted while racing is suspended (e.g. racing officials, valets, jockeys) be redeployed elsewhere?

From 1 April nearly 80% of the BHA's staff will be stood down from work for an initial two-month period using the government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

The remaining staff are already working with industry colleagues on examining all scenarios for the earliest possible return to racing and providing support and leadership to the industry in its crisis response.

Under the plan, the BHA will keep critical functions ticking over so that it can respond in an agile and flexible way as the crisis allows. At the same time, it will take maximum advantage of the Job Retention Scheme to minimise costs for the industry. A [full statement](#) explaining the decision was issued on Friday 27 March.

Those within the wider racing industry are advised to speak first to their representative body, if possible.

Section 5 - Horse welfare (last updated 31.3.20)

Will the suspension of racing affect the welfare of racehorses?

The need to look after the 14,000 horses in training and the many more who are part of the breeding industry is central to the case that racing plans to put before government. Their welfare must be maintained. We pride ourselves on the high standards of care for horses in racing and we will not let those drop.

We know that the training of racehorses includes significant bills for staff and a range of services, from veterinary care to feed supplies and farriery, which still need to be met even without the income that would normally be derived from racing.

The BHA is currently developing a welfare and veterinary response to support those looking after horses as part of the racing industry's wider response to the current situation and this forms a key workstream in the industry's operational plan published on [30 March](#).

Where do I go for advice if I am worried about the welfare of a horse during this period?

In the first instance participants are asked to go to their representative body, if appropriate. Otherwise, please contact the BHA.

Part of the BHA's welfare and veterinary response will be a safety net to ensure that horses are not at risk of falling into neglect. More detail on this will be published as soon as is possible.

Is there a risk that owners will be unable to pay their bills?

As owners are financially impacted then we recognise that their ability to pay for the upkeep of their horses might be affected. It is important for owners to note that legal responsibility for a horse's upkeep and welfare lies ultimately with the owner and not with the trainer. In order to meet these challenges, and many others, the sport is currently pulling together an industry-wide action plan. One of the fundamental pillars of this plan will be ensuring the welfare of our horses is impacted as little as possible, both through the financial support we hope will be available to trainers, and a safety net to ensure that horses are not at risk of falling into neglect as outlined above.

We know that the vast majority of those involved in racehorse ownership fully understand and accept their personal responsibility to the welfare of their horses, and we would hope that many, if able, will continue to support their trainers with training fees during this period.

Are there/will there be restrictions on horse movement?

We understand there are no imminent restrictions on thoroughbred movement planned. Any restrictions on the movement of people which may or may not be brought in by public health bodies in England, Scotland or Wales could potentially have an impact.

Any movement, including when transporting horses, should follow government advice on social distancing and non-essential travel. The BHA continues to liaise closely with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and will provide updates should the situation change.

Will I be able to get veterinary care for my horse?

The Royal College of Veterinary surgeons has advised its members to reduce face-to-face veterinary consultations to focus on emergency appointments, fulfilment of urgent prescriptions and maintaining the food supply chain. Please be mindful of this when contacting or consulting your veterinary surgeon or supplier.

More generally there is specific resource dedicated within the industry's overall plan with representation from trainers, owners and breeders to provide an overview of the impact on those who look after horses.

Section 6 – Lockdown period (created 27.3.20)

How will the lockdown affect those working in racing?

Specific guidance for studs, yards and racecourses was created and published on 24 March which aims to answer the most common questions following the Government's latest announcement on 23 March. That document is available [here](#).

Further guidance issued by the TBA specifically for breeders is available [here](#).

Section 7 - International racing (last updated 20.5.20)

What are other countries doing?

Ireland is working towards a resumption on 8 June. France returned to racing on 11 May but as of 19 May is subject to regional restrictions. German racing resumed on 7 May.

Racing has continued in some form behind closed doors in parts of the USA, Australia and Hong Kong, and Japan. The remainder of the racing season in the UAE was cancelled in March. Racing in South Africa is currently suspended until further notice.

Section 8 - Help and advice (last updated 23.3.20)

Where can I go for help and advice?

The BHA's website has a dedicated resource for the corona virus:

<https://www.britishhorseracing.com/regulation/covid-19-coronavirus-industry-guidance-and-updates/>.

Which also has specific contact details for participants as well as the latest guidance from the NHS and government.

Participants who are represented by a specific trade body are advised to contact that organisation in the first instance for advice which is specific to them:

Owners – <https://www.roa.co.uk/>

Trainers – <https://www.racehorsetrainers.org/homepage/index.asp>

Jockeys, valets, agents – <https://www.thepja.co.uk/>

Stable staff – <https://www.naors.co.uk/>

Racecourses – <https://racecourseassociation.co.uk/>

Breeders – <https://www.thetba.co.uk/>

Transporters – <http://racehorse-transporters.org/index.php>

Otherwise the BHA can be contacted via info@britishhorseracing.com.

Efforts are being made to ensure that people whose livelihoods are dependent on racing also have somewhere to go for help and advice. For example, jockeys' agents and valets can contact the Professional Jockeys Association (PJA) in the first instance.

Racing Welfare also have a dedicated [corona virus update page](#) for those seeking support.

How will I be kept informed?

The BHA will endeavour to issue updates as often as is feasible to keep participants and the wider racing industry informed. These will be published on the front page of the BHA's website www.britishhorseracing.com as well as its dedicated corona virus update page and the Racing Admin site.

The updates will also be published via the BHA's social media feeds on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

Participant bodies will also cascade more direct support and guidance to their members directly and update their respective websites and social media feeds.