



Horse Welfare + guidelines for matching riders to horses

The welfare of the horses and ponies we work with is of the utmost importance to everyone in the equestrian industry, including RDA Ireland.

- Each horse/pony presented for a session should be observed by the coach for fitness and soundness to participate on the day, and have the tack checked (this can be done during the warm-up and prior to mounting).
- The weights of all your riders should be recorded annually, at the start of the riding year – please ask their teacher, carer or parent to let you know their current weight. (It may be necessary to check weights again in January).
- Please note that the group should never be responsible for weighing any of their riders.
- If there are any concerns that the rider may be too heavy or unbalanced for the horse engaged in the session, the coach has the right to say that there is no horse suitable/available for this participant today.
- Check with your riding school to see what their current weight guidelines are, in relation to the horses they will make available for your group.
- Matching a rider to a horse is not an exact science – there are many factors to consider: balance, coordination, and flexibility of the rider, as well as the gait, stride, fitness and temperament of the horse. Be guided by the load carrying capacity recommended by the horse owner for each horse, taking age, level of fitness, and type into account.
- When completing your assessment/mounting plan for each rider, please consider the welfare of the horse. Remember the weight allowed is always the rider's weight + the weight of the tack used (absolute maximum weight for RDAI is 12 stone, or 76kg).
- The coach and the horse leader always need to watch for any signs of the horse's irritability or agitation during a session.
- If in any doubt, please err on the cautious side.

(updated September 2024).