

Racing to resume on Wednesday 13 February

Decision

The British Horseracing Authority (BHA) tonight announced a risk-managed return to racing will take place from Wednesday this week.

After consultation with its veterinary committee, and based on the latest tests conducted by the Animal Health Trust, the BHA's Chief Regulatory Officer, Brant Dunshea, tonight confirmed that racing could resume, but only with strict biosecurity controls in place.

This decision to return racing in a controlled, risk-managed manner was unanimously supported by the industry veterinary committee.

Brant Dunshea said:

"Our approach since hearing about the first positive results last Wednesday has been based on accumulating as much information as we could as quickly as possible so we could properly understand the risks of this virulent strain of flu spreading to more horses. That would be harmful to them and damaging to any trainers' yards that became infected.

"It has also been our intention to ensure that we avoid an issue that could result in a long-term disruption to racing with the risk of many of our major events being unduly impacted.

"After analysis of thousands of samples, and no further positive tests on Monday, we still only have two confirmed sites of infection. We have put robust containment measures in place around both.

"From the testing and analysis conducted the disease appears to be contained at present. The BHA veterinary committee believe that the swift controls on movement that were put in place have clearly helped to restrict the spread of this virus.

"There have been significant logistical issues associated with testing and processing so many tests in such a short space of time. Fortunately, owing to the tireless efforts of the Animal Health Trust, trainers and their local vets, and BHA staff, the vast majority of yards which had been placed on hold will be in a position to resume racing.

"Clearly, there is some risk associated with returning to racing. This risk has been assessed and, based on the evidence - and ensuring biosecurity measures are in place – the level of risk is viewed as acceptable."

As such the BHA has confirmed that two scheduled Jump fixtures will go ahead at Musselburgh and Plumpton on Wednesday 13 February, alongside the All Weather fixtures at Southwell and Kempton.

Return to racing

As part of the controlled return, the BHA has developed a risk framework which allows us to categorise individual trainers by the level of risk they have been exposed to. The ability of

runners to return to racing from those yards will depend on the risk categories the yards are placed in.

We are finalising overnight which category individual trainers will currently be placed in. The BHA will contact trainers tomorrow morning to inform them of their category and eligibility to run.

Declarations

Trainers who hold entries for Wednesday are advised to declare at 10am on Tuesday. Confirmed declarations will not be issued to the media, betting organisations and data customers until 1:30pm. In this period the BHA will review all declarations to ensure none have been declared which do not meet the risk criteria.

Please note declarations for Thursday's Flat All Weather meetings will now be at the 24 hour stage.

Biosecurity measures

In addition to the risk factors outlined above, and as an interim measure, the BHA has ordered that no entries or declarations will be accepted from horses that have not been vaccinated in the previous six months. Trainers are advised to check current vaccination records before declaring tomorrow morning. In addition, all trainers will be required to provide a health declaration upon arrival at a racecourse.

The BHA's Director of Equine Health and Welfare, David Sykes said;

"The BHA and the veterinary committee agree that, on balance, the level of risk is acceptable for a return to racing.

"We have developed a risk model, which the veterinary committee support, in order to assist the return to racing.

"We will observe closely those horses who are taken to the racecourse and will intervene as a precaution to prevent a horse running or accessing a racecourse if we believe it might put other horses at risk of infection.

"The veterinary committee are of the view that an unprecedented amount of this disease has been identified in Europe. This is not a typical endemic period and it was essential that precautions be taken to protect the horse population."

Rescheduling of races

In preparation for a return to Racing the BHA's Racing department has identified a number of key Jump races which should be rescheduled. The identified races are based on their place in the Pattern and races which provided essential opportunities.

The following races have been rescheduled:

Race	From	To	Date	Prize Money
Betfair Hurdle	Newbury	Ascot	16-Feb	85,000
Denman Chase	Newbury	Ascot	16-Feb	50,000
Kingmaker Novices' Chase	Warwick	Sandown Park	15-Feb	32,000
Listed Mares' Hurdle	Warwick	Haydock Park	16-Feb	20,000
Listed Mares' Chase	Exeter	Wincanton	16-Feb	25,000

Full race conditions will be circulated tomorrow and a further review will take place of any gaps that have been caused at all levels of the race programme with a view to adding in additional race or fixtures as required.

A similar exercise will also commence for Flat races in the coming days.

About the Veterinary Committee

The British Horseracing Authority (BHA)'s Veterinary Committee advises on all veterinary matters affecting racing and the health and welfare of racehorses. It contains representatives of the BHA, Association of Racecourse Veterinary Surgeons (ARVS), British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA), National Trainers Federation (NTF), Racehorse Owners Association (ROA), Animal Health Trust (AHT), Thoroughbred Breeders Association (TBA), Racecourse Association (RCA) and Independent expertise.