

Covered Arena Report



Introduction

Covered arenas used for horse riding vary greatly from most indoor leisure facilities due to their design, use and size. Horse riding is a non-contact sport – riders do not share equipment, touch surfaces or share space less than social distancing guidelines within covered arenas. Horse riding cannot be classed as a “close proximity” activity, horses and riders are always required to maintain a safe distance whatever the circumstances.

Equestrian facilities are designed and built to agricultural buildings specification as standard but deemed as commercial buildings by rates assessors and planning law. There is no specific government guidance for equestrian covered arena use during Covid 19 restrictions therefore the British Horse Society (BHS) has produced risk assessments to enable their approved centres and coaches to decide whether their covered arena is suitable for use at this time, based on minimising transmission of the virus and physical and social distancing guidelines, size and ventilation.

The British Horse Society (BHS) approvals scheme for centres and facilities ensures both best practice in the use of covered arenas, but also that high standards of ventilation and cleanliness are adhered to. Covered arenas are assessed annually by BHS Inspectors and must meet rigorous standards in order to remain accredited.

This report aims to clarify the benefits to covered arenas being used during Covid 19 restrictions and to demonstrate why the use of these arena increases safety and participation in a healthy outdoors sport at a time when sport is a huge benefit to the population in England.



Factors to consider:

- Covered arenas use natural ventilation – natural ventilation uses the natural driving forces of wind (wind effect) and temperature differences within the building (the stack effect of hot air rising) to continually drive air through the building.
- High rates of air changes per hour (ACPH) are designed into covered arenas to ensure best air flow for the health of the horses and riders working within them.
- Equestrian facilities are designed with strict bio security in mind – previously for equine specific biosecurity, but now ensuring bio security for human visitors during the Covid 19 pandemic.
- Covered arenas are not insulated they have no requirement for heating systems and no air conditioning.
- Covered arenas are not designed to keep participants warm or encourage higher numbers of participation, but to ensure the ridden surface remains dry (therefore safe for riding on) and that participants can easily hear a coach who will be some distance away from them (on average 10 metres).
- Covered arenas encourage participation in our sport. It allows a safe space for young children to ride, beginner and novice riders to learn and many contain mounting equipment for disabled riders who are able to participate and meet social distancing guidelines but need their mounting equipment to take part.
- Horses are flight animals. The use of a covered arena ensures control of external factors and creates a quieter environment which is particularly important for beginner/novice riders who are learning. The use of the covered arena when available is essential in maintaining safe practice, it is also what those school horses are used to.
- The average size of a covered arena is 25m by 50m giving an area of 1250 sq. metres.

Pictures of a covered arena:



Picture One: A typical ventilation door (this building has seven) ensuring excellent natural ventilation





Picture Two: This arena is 72mx25m (ridden surface) with a roof height of 9.8 metres. In normal times, at a maximum it would have 8 riders within it at one time.



Picture Three: An example of additional ventilation hatches (this building has seven spread around the building on each wall) to ensure high ACPH



Picture Four: A hydraulic mounting platform – used for riders of limited mobility (including wheelchair users) situated within the covered arena building.



Summary

Due to excellent ventilation, stringent biosecurity in BHS approved facilities and the sheer size of arenas (providing a large space for each individual) covered arenas are a very low risk environment for the transmission of Covid 19. The only hard surfaces which require contact are arena gate handles which are operated by the coach in order to control entry/exit to arena by riders and horses.

The BHS and many other equestrian organisations are working hard to increase diversity and accessibility in riding as a sport and for many riders with mobility issues, covered arenas are their only access to their sport due to mounting requirements and safety requirements. Many of these riders are capable of riding unassisted and mounting unassisted (therefore adhering to social distancing guidelines) so can return to their sport now within a covered arena.

BHS approved facilities and coaches are supported with risk assessments and guidance from the BHS and are confident that the use of these facilities follows best practice.

