



EQUESTRIAN SPORTS
NEW ZEALAND

CONCUSSION BLUE CARD POLICY FAQs FOR RIDERS

UPDATED FOR 2024

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ESNZ CONCUSSION AND RETURN TO RIDING POLICY

- ESNZ's Concussion policy came into effect in July 2018 and was updated in 2024.
- If you are riding in an ESNZ competition and sustain a concussion, suspected concussion, you will have to stop riding immediately and will be issued with an ESNZ Blue Card by an ESNZ Official on duty.
- A Blue Card means that you are **stood down from all riding activities for a minimum of 21 days** and it is strongly recommended that you also get a medical clearance from a GP or specialist.
- The rule, in the General Regulations, Article 150, can be found on *ESNZ website under Rules and Regulations*

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

- Concussion is a brain injury that can occur in any sport. Concussion is caused by the impact of force (a blow) to a part of the body not necessarily the head directly.
- You don't have to be knocked out to be concussed.
- Concussion is trauma-induced alteration in brain function.



Early **recognition** and appropriate **treatment** of concussion may improve **outcomes**



WHY DID ESNZ IMPLEMENT THE BLUE CARD PROCEDURE FOR CONCUSSIONS?

- For the safety and welfare of our athletes.
- To allow for the tracking of information about concussion incidences and length of recovery for equestrian athletes post-concussive events in order to continuously monitor and reassess national concussion recommendations for equestrian sport.

WHAT HAS CHANGED IN 2024 FOR THE CONCUSSION PROCEDURE AND WHY?

- The main change to the original 2018 ESNZ Concussion Policy is that all confirmed concussions will incur a minimum 21 day stand down from competition. We strongly recommend you seek medical clearance as well.
- All concussions are required to be confirmed by a doctor or medical specialist.
- The 21 day stand down from competition comes from the ACC guidelines, put in place in 2024 to create more consistency in community sport. It is believed that the guidelines would lead to greater awareness of concussion and a decrease in risk of longer-term negative effects of concussion.



HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE RECEIVED A BLUE CARD?

If you have received a Blue Card for concussion the issuing Official should notify you of this and give you a copy of the below Return to Riding form. If you are unsure then you should ask. You will also receive an automated notification email from ESNZ.



**EQUESTRIAN SPORTS
NEW ZEALAND**

ESNZ CONCUSSION RETURN TO RIDING FORM

ESNZ General Regulation Article 150

8. If a concussion or serious injury is suspected, by a member of the Ground Jury at the event, the rider should be immediately removed from participating and be issued with a Blue Card concussion note. A Blue Card means that a rider is stood down from all riding activities until clearance from a registered GP or registered medical specialist can be obtained. A copy of their Blue Card will also go straight to ESNZ, which will then go on that rider's profile, visible to Organising Committees and officials.

8.1. All riders who have been withdrawn from competition due to a suspected concussion are required to provide ESNZ with a medical clearance note from a registered GP or registered medical specialist before they are able to compete again. Once this has been received the Blue Card will be withdrawn.

8.2. If a rider who has been issued with a Blue Card competes without first providing medical clearance, this may result in disciplinary action taken through the ESNZ disciplinary process set out in the ESNZ General Regulations.

Athletes/Riders:

- If you have been issued with this Blue Card which prevents you from taking further part in competition over the next 24 hours at least, it is because a qualified ESNZ Official is concerned that you have a suspected concussion or other serious injury. Your safety and wellbeing are paramount.
- Please ensure that over the next 24-48 hours you (and your family or friends) check for signs and symptoms of concussion.
- It is recommended that you seek medical attention within 24 – 48 hours.
- As an ESNZ Blue Carded rider you must now return to competition via the graduated return to riding process.
- Before you can resume (competition) riding you must obtain a medical clearance. It is your responsibility to visit a doctor to secure a clearance.

Doctors/Medical Specialists:

This form is adapted from the Equestrian Sports New Zealand Concussion Policy which can be found on our website - www.nzequestrian.org.nz/safety/concussion/, and is in accordance with ACC (www.accsportsmart.co.nz/concussion/) and Axis Sports Medicine (www.axisportsmedicine.co.nz/). All medical providers are encouraged to review these sites if they have any questions regarding the latest information on the evaluation and care of the athlete following a concussion injury.

Athlete's Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Date of injury: _____

This return to riding plan is based on today's evaluation.

Care plan completed by: _____	Date of Evaluation: _____
Return to riding on (date): _____	Return to this office: Date/Time: _____
	Return to competition on (date): _____
(may confirm at a later time)	

- Return to Riding:
1. Athletes should not return to riding on the same day that their head injury occurred
 2. Athletes should never return to riding if they still have ANY symptoms
 3. Athletes, be sure that your coach and/or an ESNZ Official or First Aid person are aware of your injury, symptoms, and has the contact information for the treating Doctor.

Medical Office Information (Please Print/Stamp):

Doctor's/Specialist's Name: _____ Office phone: _____

Doctor's/Specialist's Signature: _____



HOW DO I RETURN TO COMPETITION AFTER RECEIVING A BLUE CARD?

- If concussion is suspected, you will be referred for assessment by a medical professional. **All confirmed concussions will require a minimum 21 day stand down from competing at an ESNZ event.**
- After the minimum 21 days, you can send us your medical clearance note or advise us that you wish to compete again and the concussion note from our database will be removed. Please ensure you are symptom free first.
- The time frame required for clearance is a minimum of 21 days. We recommend a minimum of 14 days before returning to training (at home).
- The Blue Card list can only be seen by ESNZ staff and competition organisers via database login.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR COLLECTING CONCUSSION DATA?

- ESNZ Officials are responsible for ensuring all Blue Card notifications for concussions at ESNZ events are completed in full and submitted to the relevant sport manager to upload to ESNZ's database.
- ESNZ will not collect specific medical records of athletes, but will track the incidence of concussions at ESNZ events.
- The purpose of the tracking is to gather data for a concussion-related educational program in order to reduce the risk of Second Impact Syndrome and assist athletes in safely returning to the sport through graduated return to riding guidelines.



HOW CAN I KEEP MYSELF SAFE?

1 KNOW THE SYMPTOMS

- Disorientation
- Poor balance or vision
- Nausea
- Headache
- Sensitivity (to light or noise)
- Confusion

2 SPEAK UP

If you think you or someone else has a concussion, tell an official, steward, first aid personnel, medical officer, or coach immediately

3 TAKE TIME TO RECOVER

Follow your doctor's advice on concussion recovery and when to return to riding safely



WHAT HAPPENS IF I GET A CONCUSSION AND KEEP RIDING?

- You're eight times more likely to have a repeat concussion (within one year)
- Your symptoms are more likely to get worse
- You're more likely to have a longer recovery period
- You are a risk to yourself, your horse and other riders
- You are more likely to get other injuries
- If a concussion is not properly identified and managed, it can lead to permanent damage or even death.

WHO DEVELOPED ESNZ'S BLUE CARD FOR CONCUSSION POLICY?

The ESNZ Technical Committee worked with concussion specialists Axis Sports Medicine to develop a robust Blue Card for Concussion and Serious Injury procedure, and return to riding policy

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