



**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 All riders who have been withdrawn from competition due to a suspected concussion are required to provide ESNZ with a medical clearance note from a registered GP or registered medical specialist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 Once this has been received the Blue Card will be withdrawn.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/](http://www.nzequestrian.org.nz/safety/concussion/) , and is in accordance with ACC ([www.accsportsmart.co.nz/concussion/](http://www.accsportsmart.co.nz/concussion/)) and Axis Sports Medicine ([www.axisportsmedicine.co.nz/](http://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: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>This return to riding plan is based on today’s evaluation.</b>	Date of Evaluation: _____
Care plan completed by: _____	Return to this office. Date/Time: _____
Return to riding on (date): _____	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: \_\_\_\_\_





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### **Graduated Return to Riding**

In all cases, the Graduated Return to Riding Program provides for a minimum of 6 days before the rider can ride at a competitive level. Advance to the next stage no more quickly than every 24 hours and only if symptoms of concussion are not reproduced with each level of increasing activity.

**STEP 1:** No physical/sporting activity  
Physical and cognitive rest = recovery

**STEP 2:** Light Aerobic Exercise, Unmounted  
Walking, swimming or stationary cycling, keeping intensity 70% of maximum predicted heart rate. No resistance (weights) training. Consider grooming and feeding your horse as part of this light exercise. Progress to barn and stall (-type) cleaning duties

**STEP 3:** Equine Specific Exercise  
Running, jumping or bounding type aerobic exercise that replicates the rhythmical movement of horse riding.

**STEP 4:** Low impact training drills  
Low risk horse riding, preferably under parental or coach supervision, using the gaits of walking or trotting. Helmet use compulsory. Preferable to commence riding on safe, calm quiet mount initially

**STEP 5:** Higher impact training drills  
Higher risk horse riding, preferably under parental or coach supervision, using techniques of cantering as well as return to jumping. Increase duration and intensity of riding slowly during this period.  
Helmet use compulsory.  
Movement, coordination and cognitive load with more difficult tasks.

**STEP 6:** Normal pre-injury riding  
Return to equestrian event

#### **Important Points:**

- If concussion symptoms return at any stage of the rider's return to riding/racing, the rider must inform the managing medical professional of their symptoms and rest a minimum of 24 hours before resuming the level of activity where symptoms recurred.
- Return to activity should be particularly cautious where children and adolescents are concerned.
- The safety of the rider is the priority and must NOT be compromised.
- The decision regarding return to school/work and clearance to return to restricted activity should always be made by a medical doctor.
- The decision regarding the timing of return to sport/activity should always be made by a medical doctor.