

STANDARDS FOR RDA MOUNTING FACILITIES

1. INTRODUCTION

RDA Australia will follow industry standards and best practice models for design, use and building of mounting facilities for use in RDA centres and at RDA activities. Standards will be reviewed and modified from time to time in line with changes in industry standards and risk management practices within RDA. These will be reviewed by the Program Delivery Committees as designated in the RDA Program Delivery policies.

2. MINIMUM STANDARDS OF RDA MOUNTING FACILITIES

RDA mounting facilities must safely meet the needs of the participants at the centre. For a newly established centre this may mean that a mounting block with steps is suitable for participants, where all current participants are ambulant. The centre must have plans in place to work towards improving their mounting facilities so that in future participants in wheelchairs or with restricted mobility can be catered for. Suitable mounting blocks include:

- Commercially available equestrian mounting steps.
- Fit for purpose constructed mounting steps (in timber/steel).

Ideally, the mounting step should be wide enough to accommodate the rider and the coach, must be positioned on a level surface and each step must be the same height as the step preceding it.

3. PROHIBITED EQUIPMENT FOR MOUNTING

The following equipment presents safety concerns for mounting riders with disabilities and are prohibited for use in the RDA environment:

- Milk- or soft-drink crates.
- Step ladders.

The safety concern is that these items of equipment are not designed for equestrian use, they can easily upturn and a horse could become entangled.

4. DESIGN STANDARDS FOR RDA MOUNTING RAMPS

Ramps can be designed to meet the space and purpose of the individual RDA centres as long as they meet a required standard. Currently there are published Australian Standards for fixed platforms and walkways which are designed for entry to buildings. While an RDA mounting ramp is not designed for this purpose, some of the Standards are applied in this document to reflect industry standards. Those standards that are reflected in the Australian Standards are:

- i. The platform (landing) must a minimum of 1.2 m x 1.2 m (recommended 1.5 m to include turning space for a wheelchair and for two persons to work safely side by side).
- ii. The ramp (walkway) must be a clear 1 m width as a minimum (recommended as 1.2 m width).
- iii. The gradient required is 1:14 on the ramp incline (recommended gradient to allow a person in a wheelchair to self-propel up the ramp).
- iv. Handrail heights of 900 mm high (a second handrail is recommended for use by children at the height of 600 mm high).
- v. Handrails are smooth, uninterrupted and extend beyond the entrance to the ramp or steps. Circular cross-sections with a diameter of 40 mm is recommended. All handrails must finish with a closed curve at the end.
- vi. The threshold to the ramp or steps should have a gap of no more than 3 mm between the ramp and the walking path surface to avoid tripping.
- vii. The surface of the ramp and platform must be slip resistant and materials used must be suitable for wear in the environment it is constructed. For example if the ramp is outdoors it must be constructed from weather resistant materials.
- viii. The ramp and platform must have a minimum load rating of 300 kg.

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The following additional standards are recommended specifically for RDA purposes:

- ix. The edge of the mounting platform where the horse stands should have a slightly raised edge. This can be achieved with a thin strip of timber beading to prevent a rider or coach's foot slipping off the platform during the mounting process.
- x. A strip of high visibility paint or tape is marked along the open edges of the ramp and platform to highlight the edges for vision impaired participants. A contrasting tactile strip of at least 900 mm long can also be placed at the threshold of the ramp to alert riders with partial sight of the entrance to the ramp.
- xi. Steps are added to the exit end of the ramp to allow access to and from the platform. (This also reduces the potential for injury from jumping down from the platform).
- xii. A second removable step may be placed on the opposite side of the ramp to assist the person helping on the offside of the horse to position high support riders. Alternatively a placing pole on the ground will assist as a visual aid to guide the horse close to the ramp.
- xiii. Signage on the ramp to indicate that access is by authorised persons only. A gate at the entrance to the ramp can assist with limiting the number of people accessing the ramp.
- xiv. If space allows, two platforms at different heights can be more versatile to assist with mounting both ponies and horses. The ideal height for the platform is 800mm high for horses and 600mm high for ponies.

5. STANDARDS FOR USE OF HOISTS IN RDA

Hoists may be used in RDA when the assistance required for a rider to mount is assessed as an unacceptable manual handling risk. The transfer of riders from a wheelchair to the horse is a manual handling activity that provides certain risks to the rider and the volunteer. Each State has laws covering the organisations' responsibility to volunteers regarding manual handling activities. In some States guidelines state that a worker (including volunteers) must not lift a weight exceeding 16 kg. This means that more RDA Centres are looking to install a hoist to assist in the mounting process.

There are a number of commercially available hoists that are suitable for use in RDA. When selecting a hoist, the hoist must meet the following standards for use in RDA:

- i. The brand of the hoist must meet Australian Standards.
- ii. The sling must offer a degree of trunk support for the rider at all times.
- iii. The sling must allow a neutral position of the pelvis for positioning the rider on the horse.
- iv. The hoist must move the rider into a position above the horse and lower them correctly onto the horse.
- v. The hoist must be able to accommodate different sized riders (e.g. easy to change slings between riders).
- vi. The materials used for installation of the hoist must meet the requirements of the environment (e.g. for outdoor hoists, the materials used must be weather resistant, for indoor hoists the materials must be protected from dust).
- vii. The installation is supervised/completed by persons recommended by the supplier/manufacturer and includes training on use of the hoist.

Other factors that the RDA Centre may consider before selection of a hoist include:

- viii. Does installation of the hoist fit within the current ramp design at the Centre?
- ix. If the hoist is installed outdoors, is it easy to set up, take down and store inside?
- x. Does the hoist have its own rechargeable power supply?
- xi. What ongoing maintenance of the hoist will be required?

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6. INSTALLATION OF HOISTS FOR MOUNTING

The manufacturer/suppliers recommendations for design and installation of the hoist must be followed and engineering advice sought where required. Where the hoist is to be fitted to an existing structure, mounting ramp or similar, then the manufacturer/supplier must be consulted and approve the manner in which the hoist is fixed. A system to ensure regular maintenance of the hoist must be established and followed.

7. TRAINING AND USE OF HOISTS

The manufacturer/supplier of the hoist and equipment (e.g. sling) must provide initial training to RDA personnel in the use of the hoist. The RDA Centre Committee and Coach are responsible for development of a step-by-step procedure for use of the hoist with the horse. The procedure should outline the roles of each person in the mounting team. Practice with able-bodied volunteers should occur until the mounting team is confident in the use of the hoist. RDA horses must be introduced to the hoist and be accredited for use with the hoist.

Volunteer Roles

It is recommended that four or five well trained volunteers make up the mounting team. The **hoist operator** gives instructions to the team and controls the process, **volunteers on the ramp** assist with fitting the sling and positioning the rider into the saddle, **offside volunteers** stand at an appropriate height to safely assist from the offside positioning the rider in the saddle, the **leader** controls and positions the horse. The rider should be consulted in the process and may prefer to undertake some of the tasks themselves.

How to fit a sling

1. The rider sits forward and the volunteer slides the sling down and under the buttocks.
2. Do up the waist buckle.
3. Bring the sling supports one at a time under the rider's legs and upwards ready to attach to the spreader bar of the hoist. Make sure the material of the sling is smooth and not creased or twisted.
4. Lower the spreader bar behind the rider's head and attach the sling straps.
5. Ensure the rider is in an upright, sitting position ready to mount before activating the hoist.
6. Lower the rider onto the horse and position them in the saddle. Once positioned bring the spreader bar down and release the sling. Remove the front loops from the spreader bar then the back loops and slide the sling out from under the rider.

Training the horse

Walk the horse into and out of the ramp letting them sniff or look at the new equipment.

Let the horse hear the noise of the hoist in operation and the sound of the Velcro on the slings.

Walk the horse past a volunteer raised in the sling suspended over the ramp.

Walk the horse up to stand at the ramp while the volunteer is moved closer and eventually lowered onto the horse, giving the horse lots of praise during the introduction phase.

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8. SOURCING AND APPROVAL OF RDA MOUNTING FACILITIES

There are a number of mounting ramp plans available from State and National RDA offices or you may have a contractor draw your own plans to meet the individual needs of your centre. A basic design for an RDA ramp is available as a Fact Sheet on the RDA website www.rda.org.au. Information about suppliers of commercially available hoists is available from Independent Living Australia on their website www.ilcaustralia.org. All new ramp designs and plans for hoist installation must be approved by the State Coaching and Safety Panel in your State or assessed by an RDA National Assessor as being suitable for use in the RDA Centre. In addition for hoists, it is recommended that the State Coaching and Safety Committee consult with a physiotherapist or occupational therapist on the choice of hoist. This approval process is to prevent expensive projects being completed that do not meet RDA safety standards.

9. COMPLIANCE WITH WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY REGULATIONS

In compliance with Workplace Health and Safety regulations in your State, the persons constructing the ramp or installing hoists must be suitably qualified to undertake the task. Should the facilities be installed poorly and an accident happens, the RDA Centre Committee may be responsible for liability of the accident. Manual handling activities are covered under the Workplace Health and Safety regulations. States should ensure that their centres and volunteers are adhering to the regulations in their State regarding manual handling activities during mounting procedures.

DELEGATION	AUTHORITY
RDA Program Delivery sub-committees	Provide advice to the RDA Limited Board on RDA procedures and standards.
RDA Limited Board	Ratify RDA procedures
RDA EO's and State Managers	Implement policy

STATUS

Version 1

Consultation with Program Delivery sub-committees on 4/4/14
Ratified RDA Australia Board on 23/7/14.