



ROYAL PIGEON RACING ASSOCIATION

COVID-19

RACE MARKING GUIDANCE IN ENGLAND

Version 1 - 18th May 2020

Introduction

This document should be read in its entirety and strictly implemented.

On 11th March 2020, the COVID-19 Virus was recorded as a Pandemic, leading to worldwide restrictions. Each government set out guidance and advice, especially around social gatherings. This advice led to the RPRA restricting all pigeon racing in UK.

Although this document is guidance, members, clubs and organisations should appreciate that it is guidance based on the Government's requirements and anyone found not adhering to the content will be jeopardising pigeon racing continuing under the current strategy. Race marking may be subjected to checks by Trading Standards and/or the Police.

The guidance is based on:

1. The principles set out by the Prime Minister's announcement on Sunday 10th May 2020, that outlined a shift from a 'Stay at Home' policy to a 'Stay Alert' Policy
2. The publication of Government's 60 page COVID-19 recovery strategy published on 11th May 2020. This document can be found via www.gov.uk
3. The principles set out in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport regarding the phased return of sport and **recreation** have been taken into consideration when preparing this guidance. www.gov.uk

Please note the guidance currently relates solely to England.

The guidance is in no way intended to force anyone to race. Clubs, organisations and individuals should make their own decision.

The content of this document will mean carrying out race marking in a different way to what we are used to, and will require careful consideration. Clubs, organisations or individuals may conclude they cannot meet the requirements and therefore should not race.

This document will not cover every eventuality. Marking stations may have to devise some solutions of their own based on the current Government restrictions/rules.

In order to race we need to meet these requirements. If we cannot meet the requirements then there will be no other avenue to facilitate racing.

A summary of the Governments Strategy

Stage One

We are currently in stage 1 of the Government strategy. This stage includes the following relevant points:

Outdoor sporting and recreation activities such as golf and fishing can take place while adhering to strict social gathering and hygiene protocols.

Individuals are permitted to meet up with one other person from outside their household. Please note this does not mean one person at any point in time, but one person per day.

Residents in England are able to carry out unlimited travel in terms of distance.

Social distancing measures of 2metres should be followed when meeting people from outside your household.

The advice for clinically vulnerable groups (such as people aged 70 and over) remains the same. If you are in this group you are advised to stay at home as much as possible and if you do go out, take particular care to minimise contact with others outside your household.

Stage Two

The Governments strategy states

To aid planning, the Government's current aim is that the second step will be made no earlier than Monday 1 June, subject to these conditions being satisfied.

(Please refer to the Government's strategy documents for details of the conditions)

Phase two then outlines that, **IF** such conditions are satisfied and stage 2 is implemented, the following will be allowed:

Permitting cultural and sporting events to take place behind closed-doors for broadcast, while avoiding the risk of large-scale social contact.

Based on the above content, it is safe to assume that pigeon racing would commence upon the implementation of phase 2. However, the Government's strategy clearly identifies that this will be dependent on certain conditions, targets and measures being met. Therefore in order to avoid further delay to the commencement of racing the following guidance has been written to meet the requirements of phase 1.

Pigeon racing is predominately an outdoor activity. Therefore, if we are prepared to change the way we carry out certain activities, such as race marking then we can commence racing under stage 1 of the Government strategy

Basketing/Race Entry

The following is based on the principles included in stage one of the Government's strategy and should be strictly implemented. This includes the fact that you cannot meet up with more than one person from outside your household.

Marking stations should appoint an individual responsible for overseeing compliance. In normal circumstances this should be the chairman. However, if the chairman falls into the category of over 70 or have an underlying health condition, the chairman should appoint another member to take this responsibility.

The Venue

1. All race marking has to take place outdoors.
2. Clubs may have to procure suitable equipment to ensure the welfare standards of the pigeons and for the race marking team are met. For example, a large gazebo may be used to provide initial shelter from rain for the race marking team. In poor weather baskets/crates will need to be sheltered but not in an enclosed space.
3. Many clubs/organisations race mark at a venue within a pub or club. Under stage 1 and 2 of the current Governments strategy these venues will be closed. Therefore, clubs may have to find alternative venues.
4. Where it is not possible for a club or organisation to find a suitable venue they should approach neighbouring clubs or organisations with a view to sharing facilities. In fact we would encourage this as much as possible.
5. Under the General License for Bird Gatherings, the APHA require notification of such gatherings at least 7 days in advance. Prior to racing the RPRAs gather all relevant details of race marking via the Federations/Combines and submits this to the APHA. However, due to the fact that many clubs and organisations will be changing their venue and other details regarding race marking each club will be required to submit the details within the attached appendix directly to both the APHA and RPRAs to the email addresses provided in the document. Furthermore, clubs should forward a copy of the document to their Convoying organisation and confirm that a copy has been sent to the APHA and RPRAs. Convoying organisation should not collect pigeons from any marking station unless they have confirmation that this legal requirement has been met. Please note that this is the law and any club or organisation not abiding by this requirement will be closed immediately by either the Police or Trading Standards.

Race Marking

1. The club should appoint a race marking team. This team should not include individuals with underlying health conditions or be over 70 years of age.
2. Where it is not possible to appoint a marking team then a nearby club should be approached with a view to marking at their premises.
3. The team cannot include members from more than two different households. Therefore, the team should NOT consist of more than two people or, could consist of more than two people if all members of the marking team are from the same household. It may be helpful to have more than one race marking team to share the workload but under no circumstances should these different teams carry out any activities together and should ensure no more than one team is on the site at the same time.
4. Where teams consist of members from different households they should adhere to the social distancing requirements and therefore should not come within more than two metres of each other.

Members attending the race marking

1. Members should be provided with an appointment time to deliver their pigeons. Clubs should ensure that appointment times provide sufficient time to complete the task of race marking and therefore avoid a build-up of parked vehicles. Members should deliver their pigeons in a vehicle. The member should place the basket and clock outside the vehicle or within an open boot.
2. While the member is in the car one of the race marking team should approach the vehicle and remove the basket and clock. At no time should a member of the race marking team or the competitor come into contact with each other.
3. While the pigeons are being raced marked the member shall remain in his/her vehicle situated as far away from the marking process as possible.
4. When the process of race entry is complete a member of the team should return the basket and clock to the member's vehicle. No contact should be made between the two parties.

Hygiene

1. Each member of the marking team should wear a suitable face covering where possible a set of gloves, for example when collecting the pigeons from a vehicle.
2. Facilities to wash and sanitise hands shall be made available. Before picking up baskets and equipment belonging to other members the race marking team should disinfect the equipment with a suitable disinfectant wipe. Please check the wipes are suitable to use on timing equipment.
3. After handling baskets, equipment and pigeons, each member of the race marking team should thoroughly wash their hands and ensure their hands are dry before handling more pigeons.
4. A two metre exclusion zone is implemented away from the marking facilities.
5. One member of the marking team to remove the pigeons from the panniers or baskets, mark the pigeon and place it in the race pannier. **Do not double handle the pigeons**
6. When each members' birds are marked the empty baskets are to be lightly sprayed over the surface with a suitable disinfectant and returned to the member's vehicle. Clocks should be cleaned using a suitable disinfectant wipe that will not harm the equipment.
7. External surfaces of baskets/crates should be wiped over with a suitable disinfectant wipe before loading.

Marking With Race Rubbers

Where marking teams are from different households and clubs do not have the benefit of a pedal operated plunger, the use of race rubbers will pose a challenge due to social distancing and this needs to be taken into consideration. Although this will take longer the following maybe considered.

Prior to the pigeon being removed from the basket he/she loads the race rubber onto the ring marker, and leaves the counterfoil on the table for the clerk to remove.

1. A bird is removed from the basket and taken to the race marker.
2. Whilst remaining a suitable distance from the race marker, using a two meter pole, push the plunger to release the ring onto the pigeon's leg. To help locate the plunger a suggested way to achieve this would be to drill a hole in a small plastic pill container and screw to the end of a broom handle or suitable pole

We understand that this is quite awkward but it is vitally important to adhere to the 2m social distancing on marking nights

Clock Setting

Clocks should be returned to the members when the race entry is completed. Where ETS clocks are concerned this will be easy to adhere too. However, where conventional clocks are used these should be set and returned to the member with the baskets in the process described above.

Loading

To load baskets onto transportation two people are usually required. Unless these people are from the same household strict processes should be followed.

1. Both 'loaders' should wear face coverings.
2. They should both wash their hands thoroughly before loading
3. They should not stand facing each other but face away from each other
4. They should not touch their face
5. They should wash their hands thoroughly after completing the task

The marking teams may carry out the loading task and in this scenario the transport personnel should remain in the vehicle while loading takes place. However, if the conveying organisation provide a team to carry out this task then the race marking team should remove themselves from the vicinity until the task is completed.

Payment

Wherever possible cash or cheque payments should be avoided. Members should be encouraged to use bank transfer.

Where cash and cheque payments are used the exact amount payable should be established before attending the marking station and this should be left in an envelope with the basket and clock – as described above.

Due Diligence and responsibilities

It is important to stress that although the RPRA has developed this guidance to facilitate racing it is ultimately the club that is responsible to ensure Government restrictions and relevant health and safety requirements are met. It is not the responsibility of the RPRA.

It is advisable that all members of the race marking and loading teams are comfortable with the precautions put in place by the club, and accept any associated risk that may come with such activities during the restrictions.

We hope that in these unprecedented times that we will come together to ensure racing is enjoyed by all. We realise that some of the rules will need to be relaxed slightly to allow everyone to race but hopefully during this time the pigeon racing community will pull together.

Appendix A (see below)

APHA form to be submitted to customeradvice@apha.gov.uk and juliafield@rpra.org by email, not posted.

APPENDIX A: Details to be submitted to APHA/local DVO

Gathering type		Race marking/training/sale/show/exhibition (delete as appropriate)				
Type of birds		Racing pigeons				
Number of birds		RANGE [e.g., 20-500] (depending on length of race and age of birds)				
Dates applicable		[xx April to xx September YEAR]				
Club	Marking location (address)	Organiser	Organiser address	Organiser Tel & Marking Location Tel (both required)	Organiser email (if available)	Marking day (e.g., Tues/Fri)

