

Head Grounds Person

Job Summary:

The Head Grounds Person is responsible for the overall management, preparation, and presentation of the racing surface, associated infrastructure, and wider racecourse estate. This role ensures the highest standards of safety, performance, and appearance are achieved for all racing and non-racing activities. The Head Grounds Person leads the Grounds team, oversees operational planning, and provides technical expertise in turf management, irrigation, and racecourse maintenance. The role is critical in delivering safe, consistent racing conditions while maintaining compliance with all regulatory, environmental, and Health & Safety standards.

Main Duties:

- Lead the preparation, maintenance, and renovation of all racing surfaces to ensure safe and consistent racing conditions.
- Plan and oversee rail movements, track layout, and racecourse setup in line with fixture requirements.
- Manage and maintain all racecourse grounds, including turf, horticultural areas, and non-grass surfaces.
- Develop and implement turf management programmes (e.g., fertilisation, aeration, overseeding, drainage).
- Oversee and manage irrigation systems (e.g., pumps, ring mains, Briggs and towline systems), ensuring effective water application and resource efficiency.
- Monitor and report on ground conditions using appropriate tools (e.g., going stick, moisture meters), supporting raceday decision-making.
- Ensure safe and compliant application of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilisers.
- Oversee the construction, maintenance, and quality control of National Hunt fences and hurdles.
- Manage preparation and turnaround of stable yards for racedays.
- Oversee the operation, maintenance, and servicing of all machinery and equipment.
- Plan and coordinate staffing requirements across raceday and non-raceday operations.
- Train, mentor, and develop Grounds team members to ensure high performance and skill development.
- Ensure all team members comply with PPE requirements, manual handling procedures, and safe systems of work.
- Lead on risk assessments and ensure compliance with Health & Safety legislation and company procedures.
- Work collaboratively with Clerk of the Course and other stakeholders to deliver raceday readiness.
- Support operations across other racecourses within the Group where required.
- Drive sustainability initiatives, including water management, waste reduction, and environmentally responsible practices.

Behavioural Competencies:

- Leadership – Leads, motivates, and develops a high-performing Grounds team.
- Accountability – Takes ownership of track safety, presentation, and operational delivery.
- Decision Making – Makes informed, timely decisions under pressure, particularly around raceday conditions.
- Communication – Communicates clearly with team members, management, and racing officials.
- Planning & Organisation – Effectively plans resources, schedules, and maintenance programmes.
- Safety & Compliance – Champions a strong Health & Safety culture across all operations.

Core Skills:

- Advanced knowledge of racecourse management and racing surface preparation.
- Expertise in turf husbandry, agronomy, and drainage.
- Full understanding of irrigation systems and water management.
- Competence in operating and managing a wide range of turf and agricultural machinery.
- Pesticide and fertiliser application expertise (including boom spraying).
- Ability to assess and report on ground conditions accurately.
- Strong people management, training, and team development skills.
- Operational planning and resource management.
- Strong understanding of Health & Safety legislation and compliance.
- Knowledge of sustainability practices within grounds management.



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Qualifications and Experience:

Essential:

- Significant experience in turf management, racecourse grounds, or a related land-based industry.
- Recognised qualification in turf management (e.g., GMA Level 3 / NVQ Level 3 or equivalent).
- PA1 & PA6 spraying qualifications. PA2 boom spraying certification with practical experience.
- Full driving licence (including tractor driving). Proven experience in managing teams and grounds operations.

Desirable:

- Additional qualifications in irrigation, drainage, or agronomy. LANTRA or equivalent tractor and machinery certification.
- Chainsaw certification (appropriate level). IOSH or equivalent Health & Safety qualification.
- Experience working across multiple racecourses or large estates.

Working Conditions:

- Outdoor role in all weather conditions - Physically demanding work alongside managerial responsibilities.
- Raceday and non-raceday duties, including early mornings, evenings, and weekends. Requirement to respond to changing weather and track conditions.

Benefits:

- Opportunities for continued professional development and specialist training.
- Career progression within senior Grounds and Estates management.
- Pension and staff benefits in line with company policy.