
Biosecurity for Equine Event Planners



Effective biosecurity involves taking precautions to minimize the risk of introducing infectious disease, and prevent the spread of infection, should disease occur. Event planners have a duty of care to participating horses. An outbreak of an infectious disease during or subsequent to an equine event has the potential to significantly impact the horse industry through:

- loss of horse health or life
- loss of the performance ability of individual horses
- cancellation of events during disease outbreaks
- increased veterinary costs, clean up costs and emotional stress

Potential Sources of Infectious Disease Agents

- Some equine infectious disease agents are naturally occurring in the environment and may be present on the event grounds.
- Infectious disease agents may be brought onsite by apparently healthy carrier animals.
 - Several factors, including stress, may result in a carrier animal becoming sick while at an event, which can shed the pathogen and expose susceptible horses.

- At an event lasting several days, an infectious disease agent can potentially spread throughout the entire venue, exposing a large population of horses. Exposed horses moved from a venue can potentially spread the disease to horses at the next destination.

Event Organizers Responsibilities

- Emphasize to event participants the need to manage their own biosecurity risks.
- Only healthy horses should be allowed to enter the venue grounds.
 - Have enforceable rules for refusing entry of unhealthy horses to the event.
- Require participants to provide documents showing negative Coggins (EIA) results and proof of core vaccination*.
- Have a single point of entry, staffed at all times by a horse health steward, to verify documentation, match horses with paperwork and assess general signs of good health.
 - Turn away any horses not in compliance.
- Arrange for a veterinarian to be available on site or on call.
- Provide a number to call or an alternative method of communication in case of an emergency, and ensure all participants are aware of it.
- Manage or minimize public access to stable areas.
- Post biosecurity signs and information.
- Provide a sufficient number of footbaths and handwashing stations (or hand sanitizer) for visiting public and participants.

- Spread stabling allocation as much as possible to prevent horse nose to nose contact.
- Provide adequate horse washing facilities.
 - Disinfect wash facilities several times per day.
- Provide taps for filling water buckets for horses.
 - Display signage so people do not touch the hose end to buckets.
 - Disinfect hoses several times per day.
- Don't provide communal water troughs.
- Designate an isolation stall to be used in case a horse is sick.
- Sanitize stalls in between events.
- Have a contingency plan in the event of a disease outbreak.

Temperature Monitoring

Monitoring the temperature of horses is a useful tool for early disease detection.

- Obtain the horse's body temperature at least twice a day and record it in a temperature monitoring log.
 - Temperatures taken immediately after transport or exercise may be temporarily elevated. Recheck temperatures in two hours.
- Report a rectal body temperature over 38.5 °C (101 °F) to a designated event official.
- Have thermometers available for sale at the event.
 - To prevent disease spread between horses, avoid sharing thermometers without proper disinfection.

Record Keeping

Collect and retain information (for at least six months) for all horses attending the event, including:

- name, address and phone number of the owner or person in charge of the horse
- the premises identification of the location where the horse is usually kept
- name and identification of the horse

Emergency Response at an Event

If a disease outbreak is suspected at a horse event, follow these steps:

- Identify the person in charge of the event and ask them to take the following immediate actions:
 - Isolate the suspected horse(s).
 - Consult with the on call veterinarian for the event.
 - Do not allow any horses to enter or leave the event.
 - Tell participants about the potential of an emergency and ask for their cooperation to ensure the health and safety of all other animals on site.
 - Implement the biosecurity plan.
 - Follow the advice of the event veterinarian about allowing people to leave the property and establishing a control area.

Other Resources

- *Core Vaccination Guidelines - American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP)

Contact us

- Call us at 204-945-7663 in Winnipeg
- Email us at chiefveterinaryoffice@gov.mb.ca
- Go to manitoba.ca/agriculture
- Follow us on Twitter @MBGovAg

For more information, you can also contact your veterinarian.