BIOSECURITY MEASURES

FOR COMPETITION MANAGEMENT

US EQUESTRIAN FEDERATION

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WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

You and your staff invest many hours preparing for a high-quality equine competition. The last thing you want is to have the event interrupted or canceled due to an equine infectious disease outbreak. Unfortunately, the introduction and spread of an equine infectious disease agent on event grounds is a real threat which cannot be completely eliminated.

In general, the frequency and number of horses and humans moving around the event grounds, the commingling of horses of unknown health status, the often close stabling of horses, and inadequate or non existent isolation areas for sick horses all increase the risk for a disease outbreak to occur on the competition grounds. Each venue poses unique risks for incursion of a disease pathogen. Good news: you and your staff can take steps to reduce the risk.

Biosecurity is defined as a set of preventative measures to help avoid the introduction and transmission of infectious diseases on a premises. Biosecurity measures taken by you and your staff prior to the event and during the competition decrease the risk of potential introduction and spread of an infectious disease agent such as the flu or EHV-1 virus or the strangles bacteria.

CORE BIOSECURITY PRINCIPLES

Everyone's focus is to keep competition horses healthy. However, traveling and commingling horses at a competition grounds is not without risk. There is no way to eliminate all risk from a competition grounds, but following core biosecurity principles significantly reduce the risk of disease introduction and spread. Competition staff can reduce risk by focusing efforts on the following:

- Restricting horse contact with other animals, humans, and equipment.
- Cleaning and disinfecting equipment and common areas.
- Isolating and removing sick horses.

ISOLATING PRIOR TO THE COMPETITION

Disease prevention and event biosecurity start before horses arrive on the event grounds. Ideally, event biosecurity planning starts as soon as the venue and date of event are selected. Recommended biosecurity measures to address prior to the event include

- **Establishment of Healthy Horse Entry Requirement:** Only healthy horses should be permitted entry to the event grounds. Ideally, health declaration documents attesting to the health and temperature monitoring of each horse for a minimum of three days prior to travel to the event and proof of current vaccination and Coggins testing should be submitted for review and approval prior to the event. Electronic submission and review prior to the event will limit the number of issues regarding health documentation at arrival. Based on current disease situation in the state or region, a certificate of veterinary inspection issued by a licensed veterinarian may be warranted.

- **Scheduling Horse Arrival:** Limits to the number of horses congregating at entry gate and stabling area reduces potential exposure to pathogens. Developing and communicating arrival protocols such as scheduled arrival times, designated gate entry and limited documentation and record keeping requirement at entry gate can help make arrival process safe and efficient.

- **Designation of Stalls:** Housing horses of similar health status or those from similar geographic areas reduces the risk of disease transmission. Advanced designation and recording of stalls allows for appropriate distribution of horses on the event grounds and creates a record for disease traceability purposes. If stalls are not assigned in advance, a system for assigning stalls upon arrival is necessary to ensure appropriate segregation and separation of horses. In the event of a disease outbreak, horse inventory, specifically

stall assignments, becomes critical for rapid identification and monitoring of exposed horses.

• **Development of Health Monitoring Protocols:** Early identification and isolation of sick horses is essential for quickly controlling an infectious disease outbreak. All participants should be notified and agree to health monitoring and biosecurity protocols in advance of the event. Minimum protocols should include twice daily recording of temperature on stall door of each horse. Temperatures should be recorded prior to departure from stall each day. Reporting of horses with temperatures over 101.5°F or horses with clinical signs of illness to show official or veterinarian should be required.

• **Documentation of an Isolation Plan:** Drafting a written isolation plan with protocols for quickly and efficiently addressing the identification of a sick horse,decreases the risk of pathogen spread on the event grounds. The ideal secure isolation stabling is located off site or in stables onsite which are away from common person or horse traffic routes and separate from competition stabling. Isolation stabling should contain a minimum of 10 stalls or 1% of the number of horses anticipated on the grounds. Written plan includes the storage location or suppliers to purchase quickly the necessary stabling equipment (water/feed buckets, hoses, stall cleaning supplies) and personal protective equipment (disposable coveralls, gloves, boot covers, etc.).

• **Notification of Participants:** Event participants and management must work together to protect the health of all horses on the event grounds. Communication of biosecurity plans and protocols to participants is critical. Prior to the event, participants should be provided notification of all planned biosecurity measures and expectations of participants' biosecurity responsibilities.

BIOSECURITY DURING COMPETITION

As a disease outbreak can put a halt to a show very quickly, you can decrease risks by implementing the following biosecurity measures immediately upon arrival at the competition grounds:

• **Determine Disease Status of the Location:** Equine disease outbreaks occur daily across the country. By visiting the Equine Disease Communication Center alert webpage (*equinediseasecc.org/alerts*) , you can quickly and easily identify any recent disease confirmations in the geographic area or in a population of horses which may interact with those expected to attend your event.

• **Perform Premises Biosecurity Walk-Through:** Typically, equine event venues host many equine events throughout the year or are open daily for use by various equine

equestrians What is left behind on the event grounds can pose an equine infectious disease threat. Never assume the facilities have been adequately cleaned and disinfected. A walk through the premises to visualize and assess the cleanliness of the stabling and common areas is critical. To reduce risk of a disease outbreak, any stalls or common areas with soiled bedding or manure should be immediately cleaned and disinfected. Throughout the event, stalls and common areas should be assessed and periodically cleaned and disinfected to limit potential pathogen transmission.

- **Implement Biosecurity Practices and Messaging:** Limiting horse-to-horse contact, limiting human-to-horse contact, avoiding shared equipment, monitoring horse health and immediately isolating sick horses are priority biosecurity practices to decrease risk of an equine infectious disease outbreak. Signage reminders of basic biosecurity principles around the competition grounds helps emphasize the importance and intent to keep horses healthy. By messaging and encouraging these practices by all on the competition grounds, the focus remains on protecting equine health and healthy competition.

- **Ensure Compliance with Health Monitoring:** Observations of health and recording of temperature are critical for the early identification and reporting of sick horses. Requiring temperature for charts for each horse's stall door is beneficial only if they are properly used and valued by all parties. Failure to ensure compliance minimizes the importance of such efforts, resulting in decreased temperature monitoring. Without observations and reporting, a sick horse continues to shed infectious disease pathogens such as EHV-1 or flu and expose other horses. Thus, competition priorities during the event should include the periodic random review of temperature charts and enforcement action taken for those not in compliance.

Equine infectious disease risks can't be completely eliminated from the event grounds, but implementing the above measures significantly reduces risk and helps protect your equine competition.

ENHANCED BIOSECURITY FOR SICK HORSE

Unfortunately, even with the best biosecurity plan implemented, horses can become sick at the competition. Prompt and effective disease response efforts limit the extent of disease spread and enable the show to go on. When a veterinarian reports a sick horse suspected or confirmed for an infectious disease, the implementation of the following biosecurity measures by competition management is recommended.

- **Activation of the Isolation Plan:** Ideally, the written

isolation plan is available and can be activated at the time of initial notification. The designated responsible party would set up isolation with equipment and supplies for the individual horse and personal protective equipment (gloves, disposable coveralls, disposable boot covers) for individuals caring for each horse. USEF and state animal health officials (if required based on the disease situation) would be notified.

- **Movement of Sick Horse to Isolation:** Immediate removal of the sick horse will stop the infectious disease agent from being shed into the stabling and competition environment. At the time of movement, an individual is designated for the care of the horse in isolation and would not visit other parts of the competition grounds without showering and changing clothes and footwear.

- **Identify Exposed Horses and Implement Enhanced Biosecurity Measures:** The sick horse had the potential to expose horses prior to displaying clinical signs. It is essential to identify horses with which sick horses have had direct contact or indirect contact (through shared personnel, equipment, or airspace). These exposed horses should be closely observed with twice daily temperature monitoring and have restricted movement to decrease contact with other horses during the monitoring period. Any exposed horse leaving the event grounds should continue to be monitored.

Continued monitoring and close observation, prompt isolation of sick horses and enhanced cleaning and disinfecting of common areas will help decrease pathogen spread and result in a quicker end to the disease outbreak.

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