



**LIPHOOK**  
EQUINE HOSPITAL

# Equine Biosecurity

A guide to preventing equine contagious diseases





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# Equine biosecurity

Everyone will no doubt be aware of the increasing number of equine infectious disease outbreaks in the UK and Europe.

Every horse is vulnerable to equine diseases, whether they are a competition horse, a happy hack or a field companion.

With the growing number of horses being moved around the country and Europe, disease is a serious risk. Movement also includes travelling to shows and coming into contact with new horses at your yard.

Biosecurity measures can be taken to significantly reduce the risk of spread of infectious agents and is defined as a set of measures designed to break the cycle and reduce the spread of disease.

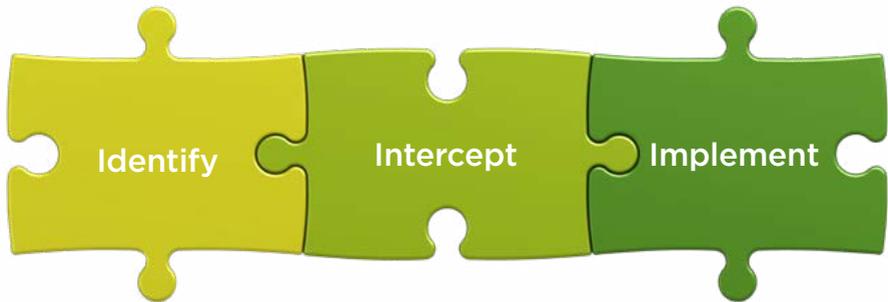
Applying appropriate equine biosecurity measures as part of your daily routine will help to prevent an outbreak of an infectious disease.



**What are the most common infectious equine diseases that we often see?**

- Equine Influenza
- Strangles
- EHV-1
- Diarrhoea

# General biosecurity procedures



## General biosecurity procedures:

- Know your horse's normal vital signs and behaviour
- Practice good hygiene - wash your hands before and after you attend to your horse
- Ensure you keep your horse's grooming kit, feed buckets, rugs etc separate from others to avoid cross-contamination and regularly clean them
- Clean water buckets and feed buckets daily
- Keep the muck heap away from the horses
- Ensure all your horse's vaccinations are up to date
- Make sure everyone on your yard understands the biosecurity protocols set in place
- Isolate all new horses

## Risk Assessment

Ask your vet to help you carry out a risk assessment at your yard so you can understand your level of risk from infectious diseases.

This should include:

- The number of horses on the yard that travel to competitions
- The business of the yard (horse dealer, riding school, competition yard etc)
- The total number of horses on the yard - the higher the number, the higher the risk
- How many horses visit the yard
- Can the horses on the yard or on neighbouring yards touch nose to nose





“ Biosecurity should be practiced at all times, not just during a disease outbreak.

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# New horse protocol



Commonly, infectious diseases are spread in a horse population when a new horse that is carrying an infectious agent such as viruses, bacteria, or parasites arrives at a property.

Always quarantine new horses for two to four weeks. The incubation period (which signifies the time from exposure to the onset of the disease symptoms) varies dramatically, depending on the disease.

Some yards will request pre-movement testing, please discuss this with your veterinary surgeon.

It is also recommended that before a horse is purchased and/or moves yard, they are examined by a vet. They will determine if the horse is potentially carrying an infectious disease and, if so, will recommend they are not moved until the horse is clear of infection.

Depending on the origin of the new horse, the vet may advise additional tests to rule out specific infectious diseases.

Before a horse moves yard, it is also advisable to check their vaccination status.

A vaccination programme may need to be initiated by your veterinarian before the horse moves. Vaccination is a critical component of controlling infectious diseases and serves to increase resistance against certain diseases.

## **An effective vaccination programme includes:**

- Identifying the disease to vaccinate against
- Identifying which horses will benefit most from the vaccination
- Determining when horses will most need protection

Isolation facilities should be available to quarantine a new horse coming to the yard. If your horse needs to be quarantined, they should be in isolation for two to four weeks, as determined by your vet.

You must report any signs of illness to your vet and yard management immediately.

The horse should be checked daily for signs of illness including monitoring the horse's temperature, food and water intake.

# Performing appropriate isolation

Because infective material can be transported on clothing, hands and inanimate surfaces it is important to keep in mind that everything that is in contact with the isolated horse is potentially infectious. It is also important to remember that most disinfectants are inactivated by organic matter.

## The rules of isolation:

- Make sure there is minimal amount of shared airspace between the quarantined horses and the general population. Isolation should be in a separate building or stable
- Keep the isolated horse over ten metres away from the others. Although research has shown that EHV-1 can spread up to 50 metres in a direct line. So if dealing with an EHV-1 outbreak stricter guidelines may be put in place
- Ensure that the surfaces are able to be disinfected
- Display signs around the isolation area to indicate quarantine status
- Use separate feeding, mucking out tools, grooming equipment and tack, etc. The equipment used in the isolation unit should be clearly marked so that it is never mixed up with other equipment



- Clearly label all the isolation equipment
- Set up an appropriate system for disposing of waste
- Ideally, separate staff should care for isolated horses. However, if this is not possible, then the new horse or horses that are isolated should be handled last, morning and night

**When entering the isolation area, wear protective clothing between you and the horse.**

This should include:

- Boots
- Gloves
- Overalls

# Performing appropriate isolation

If you have been in the isolation area and you are leaving the stables, make sure you change your clothes and footwear before you leave.

## Visitors to the yard

All visitors to the yard will need to be made aware that there are biosecurity rules in place and, where possible, restrict their access to the isolation area. A farrier, for example, could be shoeing on the yard and by walking through the isolation area could pick up an infectious disease on their clothing or footwear and carry it to the next yard they visit.

The visitors should also park as far away as possible from the isolation area.

## Using the correct disinfectant

Disinfectant is one of the most important biosecurity measures to prevent and control the spread of equine contagious diseases.

When using disinfectants, always follow the instructions on the label.

Use a DEFRA approved disinfectant as this means it will be government approved to prevent and control many diseases.

For more information please use the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/defra-approved-disinfectant-when-and-how-to-use-it>

## Washing your hands

Always wash your hands for twenty seconds, prior to entering and leaving the stables.



Wet Hands



Apply Soap



Palms



Fingers



Fingernails



Back of Hands



Thumbs



Wrists



Flush



Dry Hands



Turn Off Tap



Clean Hands

# When going out and about

At competitions every horse owner has a responsibility to protect the health and wellbeing of their horse and the other horses at the event.



Here are some things you can do to help stop contagious equine diseases spreading at equine shows/events:

- Take all your own equipment
- Avoid using communal troughs
- Prevent contact with other horses
- Tie your horse to your own transport
- Don't allow your horse to graze around communal areas
- Clean and disinfect your boots and clothing after the show
- Disinfect everything after the event, including your horse transport
- Monitor your horse after the event for signs of ill health
- Ensure your horse is vaccinated and up to date for influenza
- If your horse is showing any signs of illness, do not go!

# Conclusions

Equine infectious diseases are becoming more and more common. As a member of the equine community, you have an obligation to implement a biosecurity plan on your yard in the face of an infectious disease outbreak to reduce the risk of further spread.



## High risk horses

Any horse that shows clinical signs or has been diagnosed with an infection.

The horse should immediately be put on strict isolation and kept away from other horses.

Follow isolation procedures until your vet advises otherwise.



## Medium risk horses

Any horse that has been in contact with high risk horses but is not showing any clinical signs, should also be isolated.

Prevent movement on the yard and keep separate from all other horses. Take temperature twice daily and monitor the horse's vital signs and behaviour.



## Low risk horses

All horses that have not had any contact with high risk or medium risk horses can be kept together and continue with normal management.

Take temperature twice daily and monitor the horse's vital signs and behaviour.

Restrict movement to and from the yard.



- Every horse is vulnerable to equine diseases
- Call your vet if your horse shows any clinical signs
- Don't spread the disease
- Keep good hygiene
- Practice good biosecurity at home and at shows
- Know your horse's normal vital signs



“ Every horse is  
vulnerable to  
equine diseases ”



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