

Equine Biosecurity Practices

In the wake of the recent equine herpesvirus type 1 (EHV-1) outbreak in the western US, strict hygiene and biosecurity practices to prevent the spread of disease in horses is essential. While proper vaccination is important in protecting against disease, vaccines do not provide guaranteed protection. Further, there are not vaccines labeled to protect against certain diseases, such as the neurologic form of EHV-1 and equine piroplasmiasis (EP) (a blood borne disease spread by dirty needles, ticks, etc). Horse owners should employ the following hygiene and biosecurity practices on and off the farm to help prevent the spread of equine diseases:

Tips for Hygiene and Biosecurity

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling horses and equipment; use hand sanitizer (62% ethyl alcohol)
- Designate footwear to use on the farm; use other footwear when visiting other facilities; disinfect foot wear regularly
- Change clothing after handling horses, wash and disinfect clothing
- Clean and disinfect water troughs and feed buckets regularly
- Do not share tack (halters, lead ropes, bits, bridles, saddles, etc.)
- Do not share grooming tools (brushes, hoof picks, sponges, etc.)
- Do not share farm equipment (wheelbarrows, forks, shovels etc.)
- Do not share water tubs, feed buckets, etc.
- If tack and/or equipment are shared, clean and disinfect before use
- Do not allow horses to touch each other or touch equipment
- Do not submerge water hose or faucet when filling buckets
- Do not reuse or share needles and syringes
- Do not share multiple dose medications between horses (oral pastes, ophthalmic ointments, etc.)
- Work with a veterinarian to develop appropriate herd health and vaccination program



Biosecurity practices are essential in preventing the spread of diseases on and off the farm.

Tips on Using Disinfectants:

Disinfectants such as diluted household bleach, chlorhexidine diacetate (Novalsan[®]S) and iodine can be used to kill disease spreading pathogens. When using bleach as a disinfectant it is important that the area or object is thoroughly cleaned and dried before application because bleach is inactivated by organic matter. Disinfectant can be added to laundry because washing in hot water and soap alone will not kill all pathogens. When using disinfectants, it is important to follow label instructions for use and do not mix disinfectants with other chemicals. For more information on Biosecurity Guidelines visit: http://www.aaep.org/pdfs/control_guidelines/Biosecurity_instructions%201.pdf

Questions or comments? Contact Dr. Bridgett McIntosh, UT Extension Equine Specialist

Email us at bmcintosh@utk.edu or call 615.832.8341 <http://animalscience.ag.utk.edu/>

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