



Biosecurity for Equine Facilities and Events

The Utah Department of Agriculture and Food

Biosecurity refers to the actions that facilities, animal owners, and event managers can take to prevent the introduction or spread of disease between animals. Any time equines are commingled, there is a risk of disease spread, but especially at events where equines are stressed due to travel and the competition and are kept in close quarters. An outbreak at an event in Ogden, Utah in 2011 led to 90 confirmed equine herpesvirus-1 cases across 10 states, resulting in the death or euthanasia of 13 horses. Some stables have also seen outbreaks of other diseases like strangles.

For some diseases, such as equine infectious anemia or influenza, all equines stabled under one roof or within a certain distance may be considered exposed. For other diseases, like strangles, direct contact is required for an equine to be considered exposed.

Listed below are some actions that equine facilities and event managers can take to protect the equines that are on-site. There is no one-size-fits-all approach for facilities, and there may be additional actions that a facility or event may wish to take. There are additional resources listed at the end of this guidance.

First, some definitions:

- Cleaning means removal of organic (carbon-containing) debris including feed, dirt/mud, and manure.
- Disinfection means application of a disinfectant to an item following label instructions for dilution and contact time. Disinfection may also include heat and sunlight.
- Pathogen is a disease-causing agent such as a bacteria, virus, or parasite.

Biosecurity Measures

Identify key personnel and important contacts

- a. Identify facility or event personnel who are responsible for ensuring that biosecurity measures are being followed.
- b. Have contact information for:
 - Veterinarian
 - Event or facility manager
 - Veterinary diagnostic Laboratory
 - Carcass removal company
 - Manure and bedding disposal company
 - Potential locations for off-site isolation of exposed and/or sick horses
 - Farrier
- c. Create an event or facility biosecurity worksheet or checklist

Entry and Exit of Equines

- a. Keep accurate records of event participants and horse arrivals and departures including exhibitor/owner contact information and where the equines are stabled.
- b. Only allow healthy equines to enter the site
 - All equines that arrive should be checked for animal identification, health documents, and signs of disease.
 - New equines going into a stable with long-term residents should be isolated for 2-3 weeks and monitored for signs of contagious disease.
 - Equines returning to their home stable from an event should be isolated and have their temperatures checked twice daily for at least one week.
 - Equines belonging to the same owner or trainer should be housed together with empty stalls between groups if possible.
 - Have enforceable rules for refusing entry of unhealthy equines to the event.

Entry and Exit of Equines

c. Testing and vaccination requirements

- Facilities may require specific vaccinations or testing prior to equines coming to the event, such as influenza vaccination or testing for equine infectious anemia (EIA or Coggins), piroplasmosis, or equine herpesvirus (EHV-1).
- During a disease outbreak, facilities or events may want to require a health certificate (Certificate of Veterinary Inspection) issued by a veterinarian within 3-7 days before the event or a temperature check.

d. Monitor equines on the premises for disease

- Staff should do periodic walk-throughs of the stables to watch for signs of disease.
- Facilities and events should have a protocol in place for equines showing signs of contagious disease.

Facility Protocols

a. Water

- Events should not have shared water sources – all exhibitors should use their own buckets and not share equipment with other exhibitors.
- Hoses should not be allowed to touch or be submerged in water buckets while filling.
- Hoses should not be long enough to lay on the ground between uses.
- Do not use untreated surface water sources such as streams or ponds.

b. Housing

- Stalls should be cleaned regularly.
- Waste should be stored in an area away from other equines.
- Equipment used for cleaning should not be used for feeding.
- Avoid nose-to-nose contact.
- Clean stalls and disinfect between equines.
 1. Remove all buckets, hay nets, feed tubs, grates, etc. before cleaning.
 2. Clean stalls with detergent prior to disinfection.
 3. Follow label directions for disinfectants including allowing adequate surface contact time.
 4. Stalls made of untreated wood, dirt, or clay are extremely difficult to adequately clean and disinfect. Sunlight and drying may help kill pathogens.
- Air circulation and ventilation can reduce ammonia levels and reduce the spread of airborne disease.
- The [AAEP disinfectant table](#) has information about which disinfectants are effective against different disease-causing organisms.

c. Hand-washing

- Facility or event staff should wash hands between equines or between groups of equines. Disposable gloves can also be worn and changed between equines or groups.
- Avoid touching equines whenever possible. If contact can't be avoided, handwashing or hand sanitizer facilities should be strategically placed to encourage use.

d. Equipment and Supplies

- Equipment such as feed tubs, water buckets, halters, etc. should be clearly identified as belonging to an individual equine or group.
- Shared equipment should be cleaned and disinfected between equines. Avoid sharing whenever possible.
- Equipment that cannot be effectively disinfected should not be shared.
- Multiple-dose medications (e.g. oral pastes, eye ointments) should not be shared between equines.
- Horse trailers should be cleaned and disinfected between uses.
- Events and stables should prohibit the reuse of needles and have appropriate sharps containers and medical waste disposal protocols.

e. Traffic

- Pathogens may be spread by the movement of vehicles such as trucks, trailers, golf carts, tractors, and wheelbarrows. Restrict vehicles to designated parking areas. Facilities may want to establish designated one-way routes for vehicles to move through the property.
- Outside supply trucks and non-essential vehicles should not be allowed in the stabling area.

Facility Protocols

f. Other Species and Vermin/Vector Control

- Dogs and other pets should be prohibited from event grounds. If dogs are allowed, they should be on leashes.
- Secure feed storage areas from rodents, insects, and unwanted wildlife.
- Remove brush that could harbor rodents or wildlife from around facilities.
- Institute rodent control measures.
- Eliminate standing water.
- Consult an insect control specialist for facilities with a large amount of equines, manure, and/or soiled bedding.
- Recommend topical insect repellents, face masks, leg boots, fly sheets, or other measures to protect individual equines.

Outbreak Response

a. Rapidly isolate sick equines as far away as possible from human, equine, and vehicle traffic areas.

b. Have a plan in place that identifies:

- The definition of a sick equine
- What signs illness would trigger isolation (see list)
- Where and how an isolated equine will be handled

c. Have supplies to avoid disease spread such as gloves, protective coveralls or gowns, boot covers or footbaths, disinfectants, and trash receptacles.

d. Regulate all movement in and out of the isolation area.

e. Maintain a log of events including which equines are affected, control measures, test results, and communications.

f. If an individual must provide care to both affected and unaffected animals, they should always care for healthy, unexposed animals first, then exposed but healthy, and affected/sick animals last.

g. Work with a veterinarian (and the state veterinarian if a reportable disease) to develop a plan for monitoring for disease, diagnostic testing, treatment, disposal of contaminated materials, and release from isolation.

- [Utah List of Reportable Conditions for Animals](#) contains a list of diseases that must be reported to the state veterinarian's office.
- There may be movement restrictions placed on exposed equines to prevent the spread of disease.

Possible triggers that would lead to isolation of an equine:

- Temperature > 101.5 F
- Neurologic signs (stumbling, inability to rise)
- Aggressive behavior
- Diarrhea

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

American Association of Equine Practitioners

- [General Biosecurity Guidelines](#)
- [Event Biosecurity Worksheet](#)

California Department of Food and Agriculture

- [Biosecurity Toolkit](#)
- [Biosecurity – Keeping Your Horse Healthy at Equine Event](#)

The Horse

- [Disinfecting S. equi-Contaminated Materials](#)
- [Everything You Need to Know About EHV-1](#)

University of California, Davis [Basic Equine Facility Biosecurity for Horse Owners and Horse Professionals](#)

Utah State University Extension [Biosecurity at Equine Events: Event Committee Guidelines](#)