

Biosecurity Practices for Horses

Implementing biosecurity practices will help keep your horse healthy by lowering its contact with disease agents carried by other horses, people, insects, ticks, trailers, and other equipment. Of particular concern is the exposure to disease agents when a horse leaves the farm to compete, breed, train, or go to a veterinary hospital. This document covers the major categories of a biosecurity program.

Recommended biosecurity practices for a horse that leaves the farm

- Preferably, use your own trailer. Avoid shipping your horses with horses from other farms.
- When using someone else's trailer, make sure that it is cleaned and disinfected before loading your horse. If you can "smell horse" in an empty trailer, it has not been cleaned and disinfected well enough.
- Do not let your horse touch horses from another farm, especially nose to nose.
- Never put the end of a shared hose in a water bucket. Clean the hose end with a disinfectant wipe, and hold the hose above the water bucket while filling. If you don't have a disinfectant wipe, at least keep the hose end out of the bucket.
- Do not share equipment with horses from other farms (buckets, brushes, sponges, etc.)
- Never reuse needles or syringes used for injections.
- Do not let your horse graze where other horses have grazed.
- After helping with other people's horses wash your hands and dry them well. If there is no soap and water available, use disinfectant wipes or hand sanitizer.
- Do not let strangers pet your horse, especially if they have been in other countries in the last 2 weeks.

Let your veterinarian know about the uses of all horses on your farm, so he or she can help you determine which vaccinations the horses need and how often to give them.

Recommended biosecurity practices for you and your horse when returning home

- Before bringing your horse home, clean and disinfect tack, boots, equipment, and grooming supplies. Brush off dirt and manure, then disinfect with antibacterial spray or wipes. A disinfectant wipe or a disinfectant-dampened cloth works well for tack. Shoes can be sprayed with disinfectant.
- When you get home, shower, blow your nose, and put on clean clothes and shoes. Germs in your nose can be passed to your horse.
- Place a returning horse in isolation for at least 2 weeks. Make sure it has no nose-to-nose contact with other horses at fence lines or through holes or gaps in stall walls. If you have to work with an isolated horse, put it last on your work-day schedule or, minimally, wear boots and coveralls. Remember to remove the boots and coveralls and wash your hands before working with other horses.

Personal biosecurity practices

Keep a pair of shoes or boots that you use only when visiting other places with horses. If your shoes cannot be washed and disinfected, wear plastic shoe covers. Plastic sleeves from newspapers work well. If you are working with horses on another farm, wear coveralls or plan to change your clothes before working on your farm. If you visit other farms consistently and you cannot change clothes or clean your shoes, be sure that the other farms' vaccination and biosecurity practices are as good as your own.

Biosecurity practices for visitors

Even horses that never travel can be protected by practicing good biosecurity at home. Some basic biosecurity practices to use at your farm follow:

- Have only one entrance to your farm and mark it as the main entrance.
- To keep germs from being tracked from car tires and floors, have visitors park away from the horse area.
- If a farrier or veterinarian needs to park close to the horse area, ask them to be sure their tires and shoes have been cleaned and disinfected.
- Ask all visitors to wear clean shoes and clothes. Give visitors plastic shoe covers or have them brush dirt off their shoes, then spray the shoes with a disinfectant.
- If you have many visitors, such as during a farm tour, have everyone use a footbath when they first arrive and when they leave. This last footbath will keep them from bringing any germs home.

Biosecurity practices for a new horse

Adding a horse to your farm can introduce new disease to your established horses. To reduce the likelihood of disease introduction, keep new horses away from the farm's established horses for 30 days. Make sure that any tools used to care for the new horse (pitchforks, grooming tools, feed and water buckets) are not used on your established horses. Marking these tools red tape will remind everyone that these tools are for use with the isolated horse only.

If you have to work with an isolated horse, put it last on your work-day schedule or, minimally, wear boots and coveralls. Remember to remove the boots and coveralls and wash your hands before working with other horses.

Biosecurity practices for a sick horse

Isolate a sick horse, and use warning signs to keep everyone away from the horse. Make sure the sick horse cannot have nose-to-nose contact with other horses, and put a footbath by the isolation area. Keep coveralls and boots or plastic foot covers near the sick horse isolation area. In general, the same biosecurity practices used for returning or new horses apply to sick horses.

Control insects, ticks, birds, and rodents

Insects, ticks, birds, and rodents can all spread disease to horses. Use good insect and rodent control methods on your farm and when traveling with your horse:

- Keep weeds and grass cut.
- Get rid of puddles and empty anything that catches and holds water.
- Use fly predators or traps.
- Store feed in closed, rodent and insect-proof bins.
- Clean and empty water troughs weekly.
- Apply insect and tick control products per label directions.

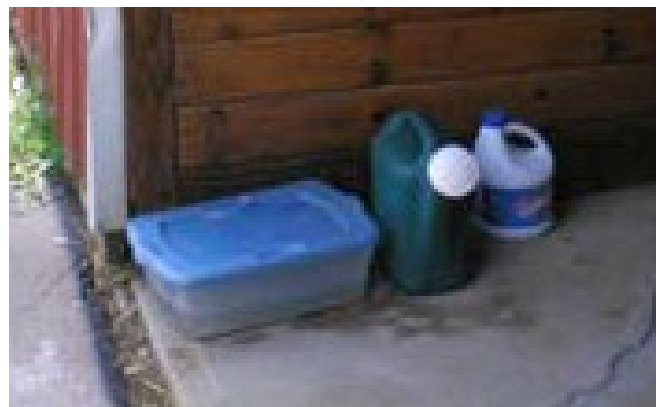
How to make a footbath

Making a footbath is relatively easy. To do so, you will need the following:

1. One plastic pan or bin wide enough for an adult's foot and low enough to step into easily
2. One plastic doormat (fake-grass mats work best)
3. A disinfectant that works when manure or dirt is present, such as Tek-trol or 1-Stroke Environ
4. Water

Before adding the disinfectant to your footbath, make sure to read the label; carefully follow the label directions for mixing and using the disinfectant. Place a doormat in the plastic pan and add the disinfectant mix until the bottom of the "grass" is wet.

Visitors should walk through the footbath, wiping their feet on the mat. The "grass" scrubs their shoes as they wipe and leaves disinfectant on their shoes. When your disinfectant mix begins to look dirty, empty the pan and rinse the mat before adding new disinfectant. Be sure to follow the product label on how to safely throw away used disinfectant. During winter, keep your footbath from freezing.



Footbath supplies

Tips for using disinfectants

Wash contaminated surfaces with water and detergent (laundry or dish soap works well) using a brush no larger than your hand to optimize cleaning procedures. Rinse the surfaces and then apply the disinfectant and let it dry. As mentioned before, be sure to read the label instructions before using any disinfectant. Make sure you always follow the label when mixing, using, and disposing of disinfectants. Using more than the recommended amount of disinfectant is not more effective and can injure you, your horse, or damage your equipment. Be sure to keep disinfectants away from animals; horses or dogs may drink the disinfectant or spill it on themselves or you.

Dirt and manure lower the germ-killing power of most disinfectants. Not all disinfectants work well on surfaces with dirt or manure. When using these types of disinfectants, be sure to brush off all manure and dirt on the surface, wash the surface with detergent and water, rinse, and let dry before applying disinfectant. When done, apply the disinfectant and let dry.

When using household bleach as a disinfectant, mix three-quarters of a cup of bleach per gallon of water (177 ml disinfectant to 3.8 liter water). If you don't have a measuring cup handy, mix 1 part bleach to 10 parts water.

When using spray disinfectants, be sure the label says it kills bacteria and viruses. Sprays work well on clean shoes, tack, and grooming equipment.

Waterless hand sanitizer, gels, or wipes are easy to use at a show or after visiting other horses. Be sure to clean between your fingers and under your nails.

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