

# Everyday biosecurity for horse owners

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There are some simple things you can do to minimise the risk of disease to your horses and to other people's horses.

Obviously, there is a disease risk whenever you bring a new horse onto your property. But there are also other ways a disease can enter your property, so let's take a look at some steps you can take to avoid that.

## General Biosecurity

It is important to carry out good biosecurity at **all** times, **every day**, and not just during an emergency incident, to reduce the spread of disease. Good biosecurity includes:

- checking horses daily for signs of ill health and injury, and ensuring they are eating and drinking
- removing manure and soiled bedding twice a day where horses are stabled or in yards
- controlling vermin and insects as they can spread disease
- ensuring feed and water bins and tack and equipment that is in contact with horses are kept clean.
- keeping up to date with vaccination and worming protocols
- awareness and attention to personal hygiene (washing hands) between horse groups on property and between properties

## Property Identification Code and Microchipping your Horses

Getting a Property Identification Code (PIC) as a horse owner is the first step towards DPIPW being able to contact you in the event of an emergency (fire, other natural disaster, or animal disease outbreak). Getting a PIC is easy and it's free.

You can apply for one online at the PIC registration and amendment website:

<https://pras.biosecurity.tas.gov.au/pras/ui> or contact Andrea Clark on 03 6165 3240

Having your horse micro-chipped and registered with Australasian Animal Registry ([www.aar.org.net](http://www.aar.org.net)), is important in the event that someone finds your horse and is trying to locate you. Breed societies and horse sports bodies may keep a register, but the person may not know which breed society to contact. So, lodging your horse details with the national database is one step towards a reunion. Contact your vet about this.

## Bringing new horses home

Before purchasing a new horse, have your veterinarian examine it to identify any potential health issues.

When bringing a new horse home it is important to follow these basic rules:

- isolate the new horse from other horses for a minimum of two weeks (although the horse may not be showing any signs it could still be a carrier of disease);
- you should have a health routine for foreign new arrival that includes a combination of inspection for infectious disease (mane, tail or coat and respiratory or other condition), worming and vaccination history, and treatment where required;
- use separate equipment (feed bucket, brushes, tack) for the new arrival;
- handle (feed, rug etc.) other horses **before** the new arrival;
- check the new horse morning and night and monitor food and water intake;
- record the new horse's temperature once a day if possible; and
- wash hands after dealing with the new horse.

## Horses on neighbouring properties

Ideally double fencing should surround the perimeter of any horse property. The perimeter fence is crucial as it keeps the property's horses in and stray animals out. The fence should be constructed of post and wire or post and rail. An electric tape fence is not suitable for a permanent perimeter fence.

Double fencing is most simply achieved by adding an electric tape fence to the inside of a solid perimeter fence. For additional protection against nose to nose contact with neighbouring horses, trees can be planted in between the two fences.

## After an event or competition

Events, competitions, rides or shows can be a common point for disease spread.

When at the event:

- take your own equipment (buckets, tack and grooming supplies);
- don't share feed or water containers;
- don't share grooming equipment or tack;
- minimise contact with other horses where possible;
- monitor your horses for signs of illness;
- avoid tying/yarding your horse with other horses so there is minimal direct contact; and
- wash your hands if you have touched other people's horses.

When arriving home from an event:

- monitor your horses health upon returning home and, where possible, isolate for two weeks. Avoid nose to nose contact with other horses on your property;
- clean and disinfect float, tack, feed and water containers etc;
- do not touch other horses on your property before showering, changing clothes and disinfecting footwear;

- avoid close contact between horses that attended the event and horses that did not go to the event for two weeks; and
- monitor your horses health (feed and water intake plus any other clinical signs).

Keep good records of horse movements (horse identification, date, venues travelled to and event that took place etc.). This information is vitally important if there were a disease problem associated with the event and would enable and much quicker and more effective action to contain such an outbreak.

## People on your property

People visiting your property, such as friends, veterinarians, farriers, produce suppliers and dentists, can spread diseases to your horses.

Simple measures to minimise the risk of disease being spread by visitors include:

- have one entrance and a set area for visitor parking located away from your horses;
- ensure antibacterial hand wash and disinfectant agents are provided for visitors to use before touching horses;
- keep visitors with horses to a minimum, and only when necessary; and
- keep a visitors record

## Working in the horse industry?

**As a professional, you are responsible for your actions, when contacting numbers of horses on different properties. (Vets, farriers, horse dentists, horse riders and stable workers, horse breakers, horse agents). You owe it to your clients to practise good biosecurity and not put their horses at risk of disease. As normal practice, you should**

- wash your hands, change your clothes and disinfect your boots before handling horses on each different property;
- keep a detailed log of where you have been;
- make sure any equipment is cleaned and disinfected before using on client's horses or your own horses;
- if you work in the industry and visit many properties, have equipment and clothing and boots that is for work purposes only. Don't use this equipment on your own horses;
- Ensure your vehicle is kept clean.

## Vaccination

In Australia it is recommended that horses be vaccinated against Tetanus and Strangles. When vaccinating against tetanus and strangles, a full course must be given over a period of four weeks and then an annual booster is required.

Equine Herpes vaccine is another vaccination useful in the prevention of colds.

Hendra virus vaccination is available and owners travelling horses to or through risk areas in Northern Australia should consult their vet about this.

## If your horse is sick

If you suspect that your horse is sick:

- isolate it immediately from other animals;
- do not take a sick horse away to a competition or an outing;
- call your veterinarian;
- change clothes and wash your hands before handling other horses; and
- wash and disinfect any tack or equipment that has been in contact with the isolated horse.

## Disease Reporting

If you have a high number of horses fall ill or any sudden unexplained deaths, it is very important that you call your local vet or the Animal Disease Watch Hotline 1800 675 888 without delay. In the meantime, do not allow anyone to come in contact with your horses and do not remove any deceased horses until your vet has assessed the situation.

## Disinfecting

### How to Disinfect

There are three steps in order for this process to be effective:

#### ***Step One – Remove Loose Material***

Surfaces must first be cleaned in order for disinfectants to be effective. Ensure all manure and dirt is brushed off the surface.

#### ***Step Two – Wash***

Wash the item or surface with warm soapy water and rinse thoroughly and dry.

#### ***Step Three – Disinfect***

Once the item or surface is dry, disinfectant can be applied.

Tack items and footwear can be wiped with a disinfectant wipe or can be sprayed with disinfectant and wiped over with clean dry cloth.

Horse transport vehicles and floors of stables can be sprayed with disinfectant made up in a spray bottle or larger surface areas (weed sprayers are ideal for this).

### Using Disinfectants

Always wear gloves when mixing up disinfectants, read manufacturer's instructions and be careful with your clothes and equipment.

## Cleaning Equipment

**Bleach (any bleaching agent containing hypochlorite)** – Mixing one part bleach to 10 parts water is a cost effective way to disinfect buckets, stable forks and shovels, and grooming equipment.

**Spray Disinfectants** – Any quaternary Ammonium Compounds. Make sure you mix up as per instructions on label. These are good for disinfecting inside of transport vehicles and tyres, stable floors and walls and stable equipment. Some are suitable for footbaths.

**Anti-bacterial/Alcohol Wipes** – These are readily available now in all supermarkets. Make sure they kill both virus and bacteria. Wipes are quick and effective for wiping over helmets and tack without the use of water.

## Disinfecting a Person

**Soap** – Soap and warm water is sufficient for skin.

**Waterless Antibacterial Hand Gels** – These are available in gel or wipes at most supermarkets and pharmacies.

**Chlorhexidine** – Any hand wash that has Chlorhexidine compound used in most hospitals and veterinary surgeries.

*Please note: In rare cases some people can be hypersensitive to Chlorhexidine so it is recommended that products containing Chlorhexidine not be used on damaged skin surfaces of allergy sufferers.*

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