

Biosecurity during Horse Events

With the Outbreak of Equine Herpesvirus-1 (EHV-1) myeloencephalopathy in May, biosecurity and showing horses have been front page news. Summer months are prime time for large, organized trail rides, horse shows, sales, parades, and other events where horses congregate. One show in Utah from which horses returned to multiple states illustrates very well how rapidly horses travel and can spread disease.

Following are biosecurity measures to implement when horses are congregated at events:

- ④ Minimize nose-to-nose contact between horses. Do not allow another horse to sniff your horse's nose "to get acquainted."
- ④ Do not share equipment for use with other people's horses. Alternatively, if any equipment is loaned, keep it away from your horses until it is cleaned with a detergent, rinsed, and properly disinfected.
- ④ Do not use common water troughs. Bring your own water and feed buckets.
- ④ Avoid common-use areas such as tack stalls used to groom and tack multiple horses. If these common areas must be used, use cross ties instead on tying horses to a post, wall, or other nose-to-nose contact area.
- ④ Halters, lead shanks, and face grooming towels should be used on one animal only and not shared between animals.
- ④ Wash your hands or use a 62% ethyl alcohol hand gel before and after handling or riding other people's horses.
- ④ Early detection of disease is paramount, especially contagious infectious diseases. Take horse's temperatures twice daily (morning and night) during the event and for two weeks after return to the stable.
- ④ Quarantine horses when they return to the barn or training facility after an event.
- ④ Clean and disinfect horse trailers before they're used by other horses.

These precautions do involve more work, more time, and more awareness. However, it will help reduce the risk of horses being exposed to multiple viral and bacterial diseases while on the road.