Biosecurity On Your Property

The simple biosecurity measures below are relevant to everyone who owns or works with equines, donkeys or mules – whether they are kept as a hobby or as a business.

Visitors on your property
Only allow visitors contact with your equines if necessary. Keep visitors out of stable areas and paddocks if they don't need to be there. Don't allow unnecessary traffic from vehicles on your property, they can park outside or in a designated parking area (which doesn't share common ground with regular equine traffic) and if it is a large property use your own vehicles to show them around. If your visitors are working
regularly with outside equines and you allow them to have close contact with your equines, make them aware that you require them to have clean clothes and footware on. Even the simple act of washing your hands regularly can make a large difference to a disease or condition being spread. Ensure vets, farriers and others providing equine services use clean equipment on your animals.

Avoid bringing problems home
Most diseases are introduced to an equine property with the arrival of a new equine that is already infected or is a carrier of a disease, or through an equine coming into contact with a diseased equine – for example, while attending an event.

Handling new arrivals A pre-purchase examination by a veterinarian is always helpful. Depending on where the equine has come from, screening tests for specific diseases may also be advisable. Consult your veterinarian for advice. Isolate new arrivals from resident equines for at least two weeks, and check them daily for any signs of ill health. While in isolation, equines should be given an effective worm paste

Visiting equine properties
People can introduce diseases if they handle an infected equine and then handle another equine soon afterwards. If you have been in contact with other equines, you need to thoroughly wash your hands before handling your own equines; also consider changing your clothes. Don't share your equine's or donkey's equipment with neighbours or other people, unless you make sure it's thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before coming back into contact with your equine or donkey. This includes headstalls, bits, rugs, saddlecloths, feed and water bins.

Prevent disease spread
The sooner a problem is detected, the easier it is to deal with. Equines should be checked daily to ensure that they are healthy and injury-free. Insect control is important, particularly in stables. Ensure good drainage and manure disposal and management to prevent insects such as mosquitoes and march flies from breeding. Stables, equipment and transport vehicles should be cleaned and disinfected regularly. Wipes, rags or towels, for example, can easily transfer infections from equine to equine, and need thorough washing after use. Disinfection and cleaning is particularly important for foaling boxes. An equine that is showing signs of sickness should be isolated. Ideally, people handling a sick equine should not handle other equines. If this is not possible, make sure you handle the sick equine last, then wash your hands thoroughly and change your clothes before going near any other equines. Any gear, such as rugs, halters, lead ropes, feed bins, and grooming brushes, should also be kept separate, used only for the sick equine, and then disinfected before being used on other equines.

Keep your stables and yards clean

Studs and large operations
Properties with a large number of equines segregate their equines by age and use, for example, keeping yearlings separate from older equines. You should always wash your hands between handling groups of equines. Pregnant mares require special care. They are best separated from other equines, particularly new arrivals, and in large enterprises should be kept in small groups based on foaling date. This will ensure that if abortion is due to an infectious agent such as equine herpes virus, the spread to other pregnant mares will be limited. Any such abortion should always be investigated as soon as possible by a veterinarian.

Boundary fences
Nose-to-nose contact between your equines and those on a neighbouring property may allow an infectious disease to spread. This risk can be managed by keeping equines away from the boundary or using double fencing. A line of trees between the fences is ideal both as windbreak and to improve biosecurity.

Vaccination
Some diseases can be prevented, or their effect minimised, by vaccination. All equines should be vaccinated against tetanus. Strangles and equine herpes virus (EHV 1 and EHV 4) vaccines are recommended for certain situations. Also available is the HeV Vaccine for protection against Hendra Virus. As the HeV vaccine is only available through vets, it's recommended that you consult your veterinarian for advice. When vaccinating against tetanus, strangles and equine herpes virus, give the full vaccination course and regular boosters as recommended. Always use a new needle and syringe when giving any injection.

Prevent disease from other species
Hendra virus is a rare but often fatal disease of equines which can be spread to humans where it is often fatal. Hendra virus occurs as a 'spill over' infection from the virus's normal wildlife host, the flying fox (fruit bat). Contact between equines and flying foxes should be avoided. Avoid placing equines in a paddock that contains trees attractive to bats for either feeding or roosting. Equine feed bins or watering points should not be placed under trees when there is a risk of bats inhabiting the tree. If possible, place feed and water containers under cover.

Investigating and reporting disease
Consultation with a veterinarian is recommended when any sick equine is identified.
If you notice a high number of sick equines, or any equine with unusual signs, or an equine dies with no obvious cause, immediately call your veterinarian, Qld DPI&F Veterinarian, or the Emergency Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888. If you think your equine has Hendra virus, you should have minimal contact with the equine until Hendra virus has been eliminated as part of the diagnosis.