

# **HORSE HEALTH, WELFARE AND EVENT BIOSECURITY**



## **PONY CLUB AUSTRALIA NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS**

### **BIOSECURITY POLICY and PLAN**

A simple explanation of 'biosecurity' is the action we take around animals and at home to help stop pests and disease from occurring, or if there is an outbreak, to stop them spreading. Biosecurity is also general term for measures designed to protect our country, state, events and individual properties from the entry and spread of unwanted animals, pests, diseases and weeds.

Biosecurity measures are actions OWNERS and EVENT ORGANISERS can take to keep horses healthy, and properties free from disease.

This event has a biosecurity plan and policy that will be put into action by the event management and the event veterinary team.

# Biosecurity Advice for Horse Owners/Riders

While it is impossible to keep horses separate at events, make sure your horse is in full health before leaving your property. Events are prime places for your horse to catch an infectious disease.

## **THE ROLE OF ALL PCA NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT ENTRANTS:**

### **THE OWNER OR PERSON IN CHARGE OF THE HORSE(S) AT THIS EVENT IS EXPECTED:**

- not to bring sick horses to the event. Sick animals may get worse during transport and infect other horses. Visually inspect horses to be transported and check rectal temperatures on the morning of the event. If in doubt, ask your vet to examine the horse.
- to provide truthful, accurate information as required
- to complete an HEPD for each horse and hand it to the registration steward or secretary or the horse health official
- to carry out instructions from the horse health official
- to monitor their horse's health throughout the event and notify the horse health official if they see any signs of illness.

If you notice strange behaviour or signs of disease in your horse, or any horse, report it immediately to the event organiser so they can determine the risk to other horses. Do not move the horse.

- If you are at the event for longer than one day, take your horse's rectal temperature regularly. A rectal temperature above 38.5 degrees suggests disease.
- not to share tack and equipment between horses
- to ensure each horse has its own water and feed bucket
- not to use communal water troughs
- to minimise contact between horses
- to minimise contact between other people and your horse(s). Discourage people from touching your horse as this is a key way for disease to spread from horse to horse.
- not to allow horses to eat any other horse's feed
- to take home any leftover feed or place in designated compost site
- to wash hands between horse contacts. Wash your hands with clean water, or disinfect with waterless hand sanitiser.

## **AFTER THE EVENT, EVENT ENTRANTS SHOULD:**

- clean and disinfect all horse equipment and the horse transport vehicle
- have a thorough shower, wash hair and blow their nose to expel any inhaled bacterial or viral particles
- change into clean clothes
- continue to monitor the health of the horse(s)
- report any unusual signs of disease to their veterinarian
- isolate returning horses from other horses as much as is practical.

## **FOR THIS EVENT,**

- 1. All horses must be accompanied by a completed Horse event participation declaration (HEPD) form. This must be handed to event managers at registration.**
- 2. All horses are recommended to have a current vaccination status with respect to Equine Strangles disease and Tetanus.**
- 3. All horses that are originating (where they normally reside/compete/train) from NSW, and QLD MUST have a current vaccination status for HEV (HENDRA VIRUS) VACCINATION.**

**Horses from NSW, and QLD must have completed a 2 injection HEV Vaccine course within 42 days to 6 months prior to the start of the competition. Horses from NSW, and QLD will have their HEV vaccination status checked against the National HEV Vaccination Registry.**

**It is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED THAT ALL OTHER HORSES are vaccinated against HEV disease before coming to the event.**

- 4. Any sick horses may be isolated or removed from the contact with other horses**

## **Disinfection is not a dirty word!**

Surfaces must be clean before disinfectants can work.

- ✓ Brush off loose dirt and manure.
- ✓ Wash item with laundry detergent or soap first and then use a disinfectant.
- ✓ Dip grooming and veterinary tools in disinfectant.
- ✓ Wipe tack with a disinfectant-dampened cloth.
- ✓ Scrub or brush boots and then spray with disinfectant.
- ✓ Wash hands with soap and water. At events or where water is not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitisers between contacting different horses.

Examples of effective disinfectants include:

- ✓ household bleach (1 part bleach to 10 parts water) — good for tools and shoes
- ✓ chlorhexidine, Betadine and Virkon — good for washing most tack and equipment
- ✓ quaternary ammonium compounds such as Pine disinfectants — good for tack and floats.

**The following table provides the 'normal' vital signs for an adult horse/pony at rest, and how you can check them.**

	Normal Range (at rest)	How to measure
Temperature	37-38oC	Insert a thermometer into the horse's rectum. Read the temperature after one minute. Digital thermometers are easier to use and will 'bip' once the temperature has been read.
Pulse/Heart	Approx. 38 beats per minute	The easiest way to take your horse's heart rate is with a stethoscope. Stand at the horse's left-hand shoulder and place the stethoscope on the chest (just inside the front leg/in line with the elbow). You may need to move it around a bit to find the heart. Alternatively, the pulse can be found under the jaw or on the underside of the horse's dock.
Respiration	8-15 breaths per minute	Observe the rib cage's inwards and outwards movements. Alternatively, place your hand in front of the nostril to feel the exhalation.
Dehydration		The pinch test - pinch the skin on the horse's neck. The skin should flatten within one second of releasing it. The longer it takes for it to flatten is a measure of the dehydration level.
Capillary Refill Time	1-2 seconds	Lift the horses's upper lip. Press your thumb firmly against the gums for two seconds. This will leave a white mark. Normal pink colour should return within 1-2 seconds
Mucous Membranes Membranes	Linings of the eyelids, gums and inside the nostrils. The normal colour is a moist pink.	Abnormal: Very pale pink, bright red, grey, bluish or yellow.

**Signs to query include a horse:**

- not eating normally.
- with an abnormally runny nose or abnormal cough
- with unusual neurological (nervous) signs
- with a temperature above 38.5°C (more than two hours after unloading from transport).

# Medication Control (Anti-Doping)

Horses competing at the PCA Nationals must compete under the application of the PCA Antidoping Policy.

Horse may be subjected to Antidoping testing.

Emergency treatments of horses with prohibited substances during the competition and in the immediate pre competition period require the permission/authorisation of the event veterinarians.

# Horse Inspection (trot-up)

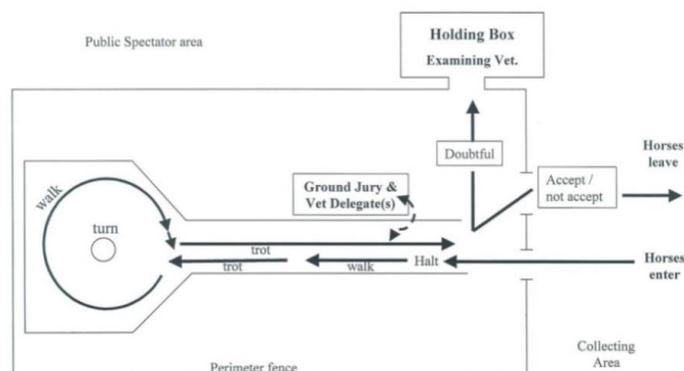
Horses entered in the competition will be required to present to a formal trot-up horse inspection. This inspection will be conducted by the event veterinarians and ground jury in accordance with the procedure and policy outlined in the 2013 FEI Veterinary Regulations.

It is very important that your horse is presented correctly and that you know how to trot it up. The following notes are a guideline.

1. Make sure you are aware of the trot up time and where it is being held.
2. Make sure your horse is walked in hand prior to the trot up to loosen it up.
3. You will need your horse id/passport with you.
4. Your horse should be well groomed and you should be tidy. This includes correct footwear (riding boots or jodhpur boots), team jackets where appropriate, team t shirts if appropriate and work jodhpurs.
5. Your horse should have a bridle on, a lead chain that is long enough and its number if these have been issued. Please make sure you have a rug for your horse as you may have to wait.
6. Your horse should be practiced at a trot up. It should walk and trot easily in hand and make sure you always turn the horse away from you. Walk for 3-4 steps away from the vet. Then trot, however pull up to walk prior to turning the horse around, pushing him away from you. When straight trot in a lively step back to the vet.
7. Once the vet is happy with the horses trot your horse will be accepted.

With the Handler on the left side of the Horse and the Horse on a loose rein, the veterinarian watches the Horse's gait from the centre of the inspection track:

- a) the Horse will then be walked for a short distance,
- b) then trotted to the end of the track,
- c) slowing to a walk to turn (clockwise), before
- d) continuing to trot back to the start.



**Figure 1**  
**Illustration of the Horse Inspection procedure**

# Transporting Long Distances

Below is some information regarding the transportation of horses over large distances.

A horse being transported long distances may experience stress and discomfort that could precipitate disease. Fortunately – these are rare occurrences that can be mitigated with good management.

A summary of the diseases associated with the transport/travelling of horses;

The Major Diseases/Problems are

- Pleuropneumonia – Travelling Sickness
- Laminitis
- Off Food/Water – weight loss and dehydration
- Colic/Enteritis/Colitis Syndrome
- Stress/Anxiety

## **PLEUROPNEUMONIA – TRAVELLING SICKNESS/SHIPPING FEVER**

"Travel sickness" is the colloquial term used to describe the bacterial disease in the lungs and chest cavity in horses that sometimes follows road and air transportation. The condition is technically known as pleuropneumonia, and apart from being associated with transportation, it may also develop following viral illness ("colds"), strenuous exercise, or general anaesthesia and surgery.

What Causes Travel Sickness?

- The horse's respiratory tract has a number of defence mechanisms which are involved in the removal of secretions and debris from the lungs to the throat, and in the destruction of bacteria in the lungs. While a horse is being transported, particularly over long distances (and therefore over a long time), these defence mechanisms are compromised and there is impairment of the horse's ability to clear normal contaminants, thereby allowing increased numbers of bacteria to gain access to the lung tissue. Horses can undergo considerable stress when they are transported for any significant length of time. There are a number of important factors involved: Most horses will lose weight during transportation for extended periods since they are unlikely to drink or eat much during this time. The water loss will lead to a drying of the lining of the airways, thereby reducing the ability of the lungs and trachea (windpipe) to clear bacteria and airway mucus.
- There is considerable muscular activity, particularly during road transportation, as the horse works hard to retain its footing. The increases in muscle enzymes after 6 hours of road transportation are equivalent to those after a race.

- There are changes in stress hormone levels as a result of transportation. The most important hormonal change is an increase in cortisol levels, which is associated with reduced immunity and can reduce the ability of cells within the lungs and airways to destroy bacteria. Factors such as age, gender and the degree of prior experience can influence how a particular horse responds to this stress.
- Transport of horses is usually associated with the confinement of horses in individual compartments with their heads elevated. Studies at the University of Sydney's Veterinary Faculty have shown that when horses are unable to lower their heads for a period of time, they are unable to clear their normal airway secretions. The inability to periodically lower the head is associated with greatly increased numbers of bacteria in the airways. Continued confinement leads to the accumulation of pus in the airways, with further impairment of the clearance of secretions.
- Inadequate ventilation within transport vehicles and the inhalation of exhaust gases and small particles may be associated with the accumulation of substances which impair clearance of secretions, damage the lining of the airways, or impair the ability of lung cells to kill bacteria.
- The combination of these factors can lead to inflammation of the airways with damage to the airway lining, bacterial invasion of the lung tissue (pneumonia), and extension into the pleural space (pleuritis). Affected horses are febrile, depressed and can appear colicky. Intensive treatment with antibiotics is required to manage horses with pleuropneumonia. In severe cases, return to athletic function is unlikely, and death is not uncommon. Studies at the University of Sydney have shown that the bacteria involved in pleuropneumonia are not spread from horse to horse but are "opportunistic pathogens", that is, bacteria which normally live in parts of the body without causing disease, but due to factors such as those outlined above, can infect other parts of the body such as the lungs which normally do not have a resident bacterial population. The bacteria isolated in the lungs of sick horses appear to be the same as those found in the mouth and throat of normal horses.

#### **WHAT TO WATCH FOR – THE DANGER SIGNS**

Rapid breathing (tachypnea)  
 Difficulty breathing (dyspnea)  
 Fever – over 39.5 degrees (digital thermometer)  
 Nasal discharge that may be clear or may look like pus  
 Poor appetite  
 Weight loss  
 Elevated Heart Rate  
 Decreased exercise tolerance  
 Dullness to profound depression  
 Fetid nasal breath

Enlarged submandibular lymph nodes (they lie under your horse's jaw)  
Cough, especially if productive – horses often look as though they are chewing or swallowing after a productive cough

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO HELP PREVENT PLEUROPNEUMONIA (TRAVEL SICKNESS)**

- Minimise lower respiratory tract contamination.
  - ❖ Increased bacterial contamination and the accumulation of pus in the airways usually occurs after 12 to 24 hours of transportation, but may be apparent within 6 hours in some horses.
  - ❖ It takes about 12 hours to clear the bacteria and secretions that accumulate after elevation of the head for 24 hours. The treatment of horses with antibiotics before or during transport has no influence on the accumulation of secretions and bacteria.
  - ❖ Prevent entry of bacteria into the lungs.
  - ❖ Increased bacterial contamination of the lower respiratory tract is unavoidable if horses are transported with their heads elevated for a significant period (may be at least 6 hours). It is therefore important to minimise the extension of this airway contamination to the lung tissue. Transportation over long distances should be broken up into 12 hour stages with 8 to 12 hour rest periods between stages. Horses should be fed from the ground after travel to assist in the clearance of contaminated secretions from the lower airways.
  - ❖ It is important to ensure that horses are in good health prior to long distance road, or air, transport. Horses with mild or subclinical viral infections prior to transportation are more likely to develop pleuropneumonia with transport. The likelihood of such infections can be monitored by daily measurement of rectal temperature in horses due to be transported by road over long distances or by air.
  - ❖ More recent studies have indicated that the lung's defence mechanisms may be compromised for at least 36 hours after long road or air transportation, suggesting that horses may require a number of days to recover from the stress associated with such travel.

## **LAMINITIS**

What to look for;

Risk factors – overfed/obese horse (show horses)

Lameness

Stiffness

Shuffling stance

Can't move

Lies Down in the Float

Strong Digital pulse (know how to assess it)

## **OFF FOOD/WATER – WEIGHT LOSS AND DEHYDRATION**

Take along your horse's favourite food

Try putting apples in water bucket

Use Water additives (electrolytes/molasses) to aid in drinking

Consider Gastric Ulcer Medication (omeprazole – Gastrozol, get veterinary advice)

## **SUGGESTED TRAVEL MEDICAL KIT**

- Emergency treatments – wounds, lacerations
  - Bandages, disinfectant, wound creams
- Dehydration – electrolytes, appetite stimulant
- Anti-inflammatories (bute, Finadyne – get veterinary advice before use, these are swabbable)
- Eye Treatments
  - Creams, ointment
- Drug Rule Book/Medication Log Book
- Diagnostic tools
  - Digital Thermometer
  - Stethoscope
  - Some Examples of Therapeutics

## **TIPS TO REDUCE TRAVELLING DISEASES**

- Only transport healthy horses, watch for coughs
- Travel at night/morning to reduce heat stress. Reduce cramping, excessive noise, heat, high speed driving, try and get there promptly.
- Provide dampened hay low down or green pick
- Don't tie head too short
- Ensure adequate air flow, do not stay stationary for too long without off loading
- On longer trips, try to stop every 8 – 10 hours and off load to enable horses to “stretch their legs”
- Cover with a light rug to avoid dust, keep float upper back doors closed
- Put absorbent on the floor
- Travel near the front on large transports
- Post arrival vet examination/blood test
- Arrive at least 3-5 days before competition begins to allow time for recovery

## **PRETRAVELLING TREATMENT SUGGESTIONS**

- General health check +/- blood test
- Comprehensive Emergency First Aid Kit – talk to your vet
- Electrolytes/Hydration (saline drench/IV fluids pre transport if weather is hot)
- Supplement with oral Tonics – Vitamins
- Reduce Grain/Nutrition in the diet immediately pre-transport
- ANTIBIOTICS pre and during travel are recommended (get veterinary advice)  
(eg Sulpha antibiotics, Ceftiofur)
- ✓ Continual assessment, especially rectal temperature
- ✓ Veterinary Management Plan for all the “issues”

# HORSE EVENT PARTICIPATION DECLARATION (HEPD)

Fill out this Horse Event Participation Declaration ON THE DAY OF THE EVENT and hand it to the event secretary BEFORE the event begins.

Event: \_\_\_\_\_ Event date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of owner or person in charge of horse(s) at the event: *(Separate form for different owners please.)*

\_\_\_\_\_

Contact phone:

(H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (Mob) \_\_\_\_\_

Email:

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Owner of horse(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Owner's address (if different to above): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Contact phone:

(H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (Mob) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of horse(s)	Male/Female Castrate	Identification (colour/markings/brand/microchip number)	HEV Vaccination (Hendra) Yes/No

Address of property at which the horse(s) normally resides:

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Address(es) of property where the horse(s) resided before the event (include stays overnight in transit; anywhere unloading and reloading occurred):

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Address of the property to which the horse(s) will be returning after this event:

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List any current medical conditions/ailments and treatment administered:

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### Health of horse

I, \_\_\_\_\_, declare that the horse(s) named above has/have been in good health, eating normally and not shown signs of respiratory or any other disease during the past three days leading up to this event. I authorise the designated event horse health official to call for veterinary inspection of the horse(s) named above if they show any signs of a respiratory illness or any other disease at any time during the course of the event. I agree to pay any veterinary fees incurred as a result of this veterinary examination.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*(Owner or person in charge of the horse(s) at the event)*

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*(Owner or person in charge of the horse(s) at the event)*

*Event organisers must keep this form for 28 day for disease traceability purposes. These forms are to trace all horses that have been at an event if an emergency disease occurs in order to minimise spread of disease.*