

Recommendations for Horse Show/Event Managers Regarding Equine Herpes Virus (EHV-1) Biosecurity Procedures

These biosecurity guidelines have been developed based on currently available information, by ODA veterinarians and the faculty at the College of Veterinary Medicine at Oregon State University, to minimize the risk of transmission of infectious diseases at public equestrian events. If the situation changes, these and other guidelines will be modified as appropriate.

When the current EHV-1 outbreak began, horse owners were initially advised to avoid nonessential transport of their animals to reduce the risk of exposure to, or spread of the virus among, the horse population. Now that we have obtained more information through ongoing testing, reporting and monitoring, we have concluded that the EHV-1 infection outbreak is centered around horses that were present at the National Cutting Horse Association's Western National Championships held at the Golden Spike Event Center in Ogden, Utah from April 30th to May 8th. This includes horses that did not attend the Ogden event but have subsequently come into close contact with horses returning from that event.

The EHV-1 virus is a naturally occurring virus of the equine population. It may lie dormant in an infected animal for long periods of time and then re-activate during a period of stress resulting in clinical disease in the host as well as spreading to other horses in close contact. The reasons why EHV-1 causes severe neurological signs in some but not all horses are not fully understood. Because this virus lies dormant in so many normal horses, there is never an "ALL CLEAR/ NO RISK" when horses commingle. Horse owners should practice basic every day biosecurity if they want to protect their own horse(s) from exhibiting or being exposed to this virus as well as other highly contagious pathogens.

Based on what is known today, we are suggesting that managers of horse shows or events occurring in Oregon consider incorporation of the following biosecurity measures to minimize the disease risk for all participants.

(These measures are directed at protection from not only herpes virus infections but from other highly contagious equine diseases including strangles and pigeon fever.)

1. Since horse-to-horse contact is an important risk for many contagious diseases including EHV-1, event managers could allocate enough space in warm up and wash/clean up areas to minimize nose-to-nose contact between horses.
2. Managers could further reduce the risk of disease spread from human hands by limiting access to horses by the visiting public and other contestants by establishing restrictive spaces in front of stalls and other places where horses are secured between show events (such as at trailers).
3. Managers could post information signs that advise contestants not to share equipment, including riding clothes, and to wash their hands before and after handling horses that belong to other people.

4. If horses are to be housed in stalls during the event, it is preferable that stalls have solid sides high enough to prevent horse-to-horse contact or droplet transmission. (We recognize that many event locations will not be able to offer such high walled stalls to their participants)
5. For multi-day events, managers might consider establishing a “No Fever” policy for horses attending the event. Give the participants notice of the new “No Fever” policy before they arrive at the show grounds. Provide instructions for obtaining the horse’s temperature and an index card on which to record temperature readings for each horse.

Suggested language for the “No Fever” policy follows.

- All horses will have temperatures taken twice daily and results will be posted on front of the stall/pen/trailer for inspection.
 - Any horse will be subject to random temperature check by the show veterinarian or designated member of the veterinary staff during the event.
 - Any horse with a fever of 102°F or greater, unassociated with exercise in the preceding two hours, will be removed from the event and premises immediately (i.e., within 2 hours of detection of fever).
 - If the owner cannot move the horse off the premises, a professional horse hauler contracted by the event will remove the horse to a designated isolation area at the owner’s expense.
 - NOTE: It is understood that some (most) horses with a fever will not have EHV-1; however, in the interest of conducting a safe event under the current circumstances, the no fever policy will be enforced. If you do not wish to comply with these safety measures please do not attend the event.
6. Other suggestions to consider:
 - Communal stall cleaning equipment should be disinfected between each stall.
 - For large and/or multi-day events, managers should employ a veterinarian to be on the grounds for the event and not just on emergency call