

Protect your horse from pests and diseases

We all love our horses and they are a big part of lives. This is why it is important to keep them healthy and protect them from harmful pests and diseases.

You will probably remember the horse flu (equine influenza) outbreak that happened in Australia in 2007. This was a reminder to all horse owners to practice 'biosecurity' around their animals.

What is biosecurity?

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. This can be something as simple as washing your hands before and after handling your horse. Below is a list of 'biosecurity' actions you can do at home and when attending horse events like Pony Club.

At home



While it is great to show your friends and family your horse, it is a good idea for these people to look at your horse from a distance and not come into direct contact with him/her. This is not only for their safety, but if they have been in contact with other sick animals before coming to visit you, they may pass that illness onto your horse. For farriers, vets and other people who attend to your horse, ask them if their equipment has been cleaned before they use it on your horse.

If you have a new horse arriving at your place, it should be put in a separate paddock where it cannot come into direct contact with the horse(s) already on the property – this is called 'quarantine'. If the new horse is sick, you will be able to have your vet treat that horse before it can infect others. Always wash your hands and put on clean clothes between working with the horse in quarantine and your existing horse(s).

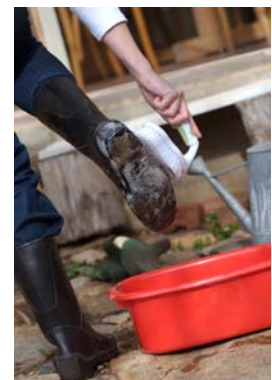
Horse gear/tack

It is important not to share your horses' gear (this includes saddles, bridles, saddlecloths, feed and water bins etc) with other people's horses. This is an easy way for germs to spread between animals.

If for some reason your gear has been in contact with another horse, make sure you clean it thoroughly with soapy water **and then** disinfect it. You can use an ordinary disinfectant that you will probably find at home or can buy at the supermarket. For leather gear like your saddle, clean it with a saddle cleaning product, making sure you wipe off the sweat and pull off any horse hair. You should then wipe the gear over with disinfectant on a damp cloth (this won't hurt the leather). Don't forget to include your girth strap, stirrups and any equipment like martingales in this cleaning process.

Your gear needs to be clean too!

You may never have guessed but some diseases can be carried easily on your clothes and shoes, on your hat, and even in your hair! In some cases, this is how horse flu spread to more horses in the 2007 horse flu outbreak.





protect your animals and produce from pests and disease

If you are going to someone else's place who has horses (or other animals), be sure to wash your hands with soap and water, and change into clean clothes and shoes before you arrive at their place.

Floats and trucks

If you have a horse float or truck and it is used to pick up and take horses from other properties, it should be cleaned out and disinfected before loading new animals for its next trip. Pests and diseases can be carried in horse manure and mucus, both of which is often found in the float after horses have been transported.

Take action if your horse gets sick!

If you think your horse is unwell and could have a disease, you need to tell someone immediately. You should phone your local vet or the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on **1800 675 888**. This hotline will connect you to the department of primary industries who are the agriculture authority in your state. An officer there will answer the call and provide you with information on what to do next.



If your horse is sick don't take him/her off the property and if possible, quarantine (isolate) them in a stable or yard if you have one. Especially when a horse is sick, it is very important to keep washing your hands, clothes and other equipment you have used around this horse.

Want more information?

There is a lot of information available about protecting not only your horse, but all of your animals from pests and disease. Here are some websites for you to explore:

- The Biosecurity Services Group website: **www.daff.gov.au/biosecurity**. This website has some cool, free material that will help remind people that biosecurity is important at your place. We also have some video downloads coming to the site soon, so watch out for them!
- Animal Health Australia has heaps of information about on-farm biosecurity and this can be found by visiting their website: **www.farmbiosecurity.com.au**
- Maybe you'd like to subscribe to the Australian Horse Industry Council's *Emergency Horse Contact Database*? This is a free service that provides horse owners with relevant, localised information during an emergency, including disease outbreaks, fires and floods. This information can be provided by email, text message or fax. The AHIC can be contacted by phoning (03) 5222 6650 or visit their website **www.horsecouncil.org.au**
- If you're after some information about good land management and horses, this site has it all: **www.horseslandwater.com** Horses, Land and Water – an Australian website containing information and resources for horse keeping and good land management practices.



If you have a friend or family member who could use this information, feel free to make a copy for them or request another copy by emailing the Biosecurity Services Group **bemu@daff.gov.au**

This fact sheet was produced by the National Biosecurity Emergency Management Unit in the Biosecurity Services Group.