



March 30, 2022

## Moving Forward: Promoting Safer Sport & Healthy Horse Venues

CDFA greatly appreciates the support and cooperation of the equine industry in limiting and controlling the spread of EHV-1 infection during the recent California outbreak. **The cautionary recommendation to postpone equine events and limit non-essential movement expires on March 31<sup>st</sup> and will not be extended.** Due largely to the equine industry's support in limiting movement, postponing events, and promoting biosecurity at equine facilities, ongoing EHV-1 detections have significantly decreased and premises with active EHV-1 infection related to an EHM case remain quarantined.

The past several months have highlighted the gravity and reality of infectious disease outbreaks at equine events, and the challenges of managing endemic infectious diseases in dynamic horse populations. There is **always** inherent risk of disease transmission whenever horses from distinct populations commingle, and factors such as transportation and show stress can increase susceptibility to infection, and high-density housing, high human traffic with contact of multiple horses, and shared tack and equipment, even within a training barn, can further increase risk of disease transmission. Horse owners, equine competitors, event management, and veterinarians, as well as state animal health officials, all share the responsibility of creating the safest possible equine event venues and facilities. As such, CDFA supports and recommends these best practices for all equine events, in addition to those recommended in the [Equine Biosecurity Toolkit](#):

### MINIMIZE RISKS

EHV-1, as well as other endemic equine infectious disease agents such as equine influenza and rhinitis viruses, *Streptococcus equi* spp *equi* (Strangles) and *Corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis* (Pigeon fever) are pathogens that can be controlled, but not eradicated at this time. **Minimizing the risk of introducing or spreading an infectious disease within equine events and facilities should be the priority** of every equine stakeholder, including owners, trainers, veterinarians, event managers, and equine facility staff.

Recommended infectious disease prevention practices include:

- **“Healthy Horse Only” policy** – Require a health certificate issued by a veterinarian or a health attestation signed by the owner at time of entry that includes such statements as a horse has had no fevers for 72 hours prior to entering a competition venue and has had no known contact with ill horses within the prior 14 days.
- **Proof of vaccination** – Printed or electronic copy of flu/rhino vaccination provided at time of entry to the venue, and verified by event staff prior to competition.
- **Monitoring** – Mandatory daily temperature monitoring while at an equine event, including immediate isolation of any febrile horse (any rectal temperature at or above 101.5 Fahrenheit), or any horse exhibiting clinical signs of infectious disease such as nasal discharge, respiratory changes, neurological signs (including incoordination or dribbling urine), or diarrhea.



- **Decreased housing density:**
  - Event stabling should contain fewer stalls per housing barn to limit the size of potential exposure cohorts, and/or have a minimum of 2 empty stalls between cohort groups (in both front and behind if double row stalls).
  - Increase space between barn aisles and between housing barns; ideally a minimum of 30 feet apart.
  - Create physical separations and/or spacing between training groups or distinct cohorts.
- **Minimize indirect transmission routes** – Strongly discourage personnel and equipment moving between cohorts of horses unless enhanced biosecurity precautions are taken.

## RAPID ISOLATION AND CONTAINMENT

The next critical priority of equine stakeholders at equine events and large facilities is to **contain disease spread at the first signs of a potential infectious agent**. Isolation space should be clearly identified at any event facility, and should ideally include two distinct areas, one area for **suspect** horses awaiting diagnostic testing results, and a second area for any horses that test **positive** for an infectious agent of concern.

While fever is often the first sign of potential infection in horses, other concerning signs of disease include nasal discharge, coughing or respiratory changes, diarrhea, or neurological signs such as incoordination, urine dribbling, or changes in mentation. Horses with any suspicion of an infectious agent, even prior to any diagnostic results, should be immediately isolated in a pre-designated area, ideally a minimum of 30 feet away from any other horses.

## CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Prompt notification of a show or facility veterinarian at the first signs of communicable disease is crucial, and a clear **official communication chain** should be established prior to the start of any equine event that will allow veterinarians, event management, trainers, owners, and staff to share accurate **and timely** information.

As a statewide community invested in protecting and promoting equine health and safety, we must continue to advance our understanding of infectious disease control and prevention through collaboration and communications with researchers and equine industry stakeholders, and promote safer and more biosecure equine events and facilities in California.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to the protection of the health and welfare of California's equine population.

Sincerely,



Dr. Annette Jones  
Director and State Veterinarian

