



The Informed Arizona Equestrian HORSE HEALTH SERIES

Barn Smarts for Biosecurity: Tips for Keeping Your Horse Safe and Healthy

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(Illustrated by Nicole Ludwig)*

Whenever the word “Biosecurity” is mentioned in an equine environment, it is often met with shoulder shrugs or eye rolls. While everyone seems to acknowledge that Biosecurity is an important topic, people tend to think it either won’t happen to them (their horse catching a disease), or that the changes needed involve a huge investment in time, money, or effort. People often assume that they’ve done their due diligence by vaccinating; however, vaccinations are not 100% effective, and not every disease has an available vaccine.

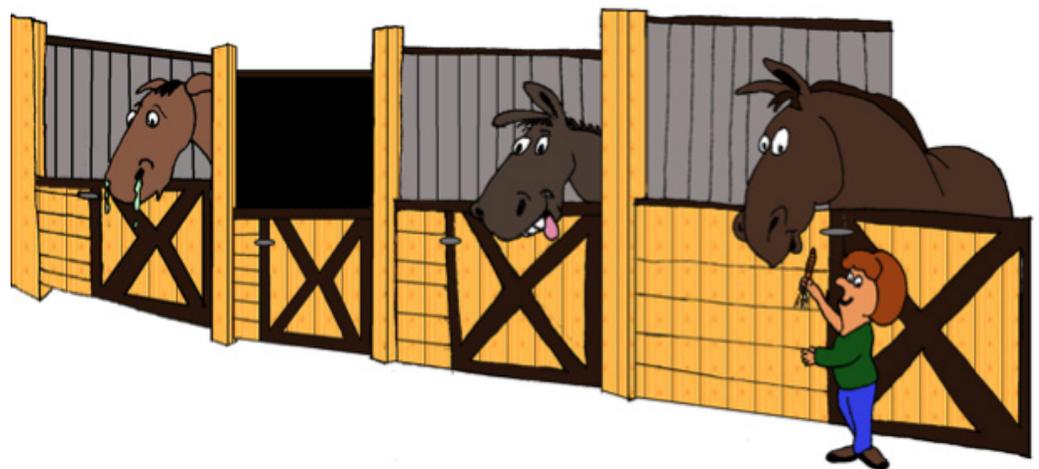
By making several simple horse care changes, you can significantly decrease your horse’s risk of exposure to disease. Using the tips below, you may prevent your horse from being

exposed to sick horses while away at a show. If your horse were to bring a virus home, proper Biosecurity practices could result in just one sick horse, as opposed to a whole barn full.

The intent of this article is to inject a little humor while providing key common sense tips on Biosecurity. Each tip is accompanied by an easy to remember theme and cartoon. These changes seem small, but they can make a big difference in protecting the health of your horse. While testing these tips on seasoned horsemen and women, many experienced the “ah hah moment” and responded with “I never even thought about that” or “I used to know that!” Test your own knowledge and share this information with youth and adults far and wide.

Don’t be a “Typhoid Mary”!

You don’t want to be the one spreading illness to healthy horses in your barn. If you are caring for a sick horse, first care for all of the healthy animals, then work with the sick horse. Always change clothes (including footwear) and wash your hands thoroughly before you go back to healthy animals.





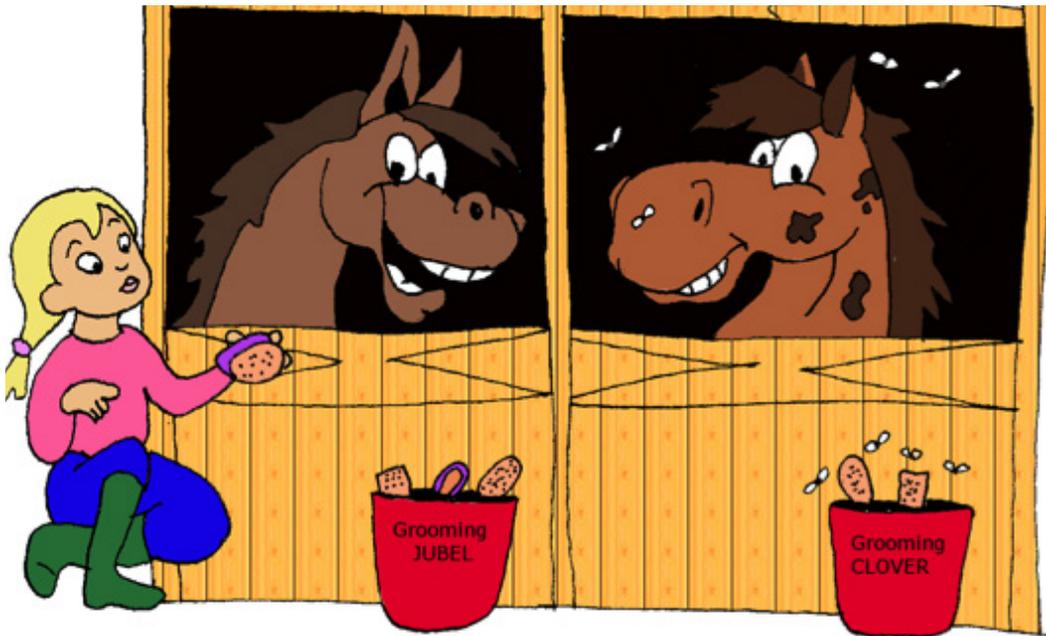
No double dipping.

Don't immerse the end of the hose in your horse's water bucket. The hose may be contaminated, spreading germs or illness from horse to horse. Instead, hold the hose and don't let it contact the bucket or the water in the bucket. One solution would be to bring your own hose or a container of disinfectant to dip the end of the hose.

Sharing Snot 'sNOT Cool!

While away at a show, don't allow your horse to make nose to nose contact with other horses. If possible, use your tack stall as a barrier between your horse and their neighbor. Always provide your own water buckets, don't allow your horses to drink from the community water tub. Disinfect tools and equipment (including your trailer and tires!) during your stay and after you return home.





Selfish is Safer!

Resist the temptation to share items between horses (preferably they share none). Even items like brushes and saddle pads can transmit viruses, bacteria, and fungi to other animals. A little bit of selfishness with your equipment can protect your horse.

Clean poop is still poop!

To effectively disinfect equipment and stall walls, you must remove all traces of organic material (e.g. manure, bedding, or dirt). This process may need to be done daily if you have a sick horse. It should be noted that porous surfaces such as wood or dirt can be difficult or impossible to completely disinfect...





Don't play mad scientist with cleaners.

Never mix disinfectants or chemicals. Always follow all label instructions, including the contact time required to fully disinfect the surface or equipment. Your veterinarian can help you choose a disinfectant appropriate for the task..

Horses need sick days too!

(Don't let your horse be Typhoid Mary either!) Always leave sick horses at home. The stress of travel and showing will not help them recover, could expose them to secondary infections, and you will be exposing many other horses to the illness.



An Ounce of Prevention...

Horse shows are similar to kindergarten; there are lots of germs to go around. Your horse may need additional or more frequent vaccinations to ensure he is protected both at home and on the road. Your veterinarian can provide guidance based on your travel and show plans for the year. Unfortunately, there is not a vaccination for every disease, which is why proper Biosecurity is still important.



Do your horse's dishes

Dumping water buckets is not enough to protect your horse. Scrub and disinfect on a regular basis to prevent the buildup of bacteria, algae, and other contaminants. This also includes feed tubs, water tanks, and supplement buckets.

No Free Lunch!

Always store feed in rodent proof bins. Mice and rats harbor and spread diseases, and their droppings contaminate feed and equipment. Skunks and other wildlife are potential carriers of rabies and should be kept away from Flicka's and Fido's food bowls. Discourage birds from nesting in barn areas, as they also may harbor disease and can contaminate food and water sources with their droppings.

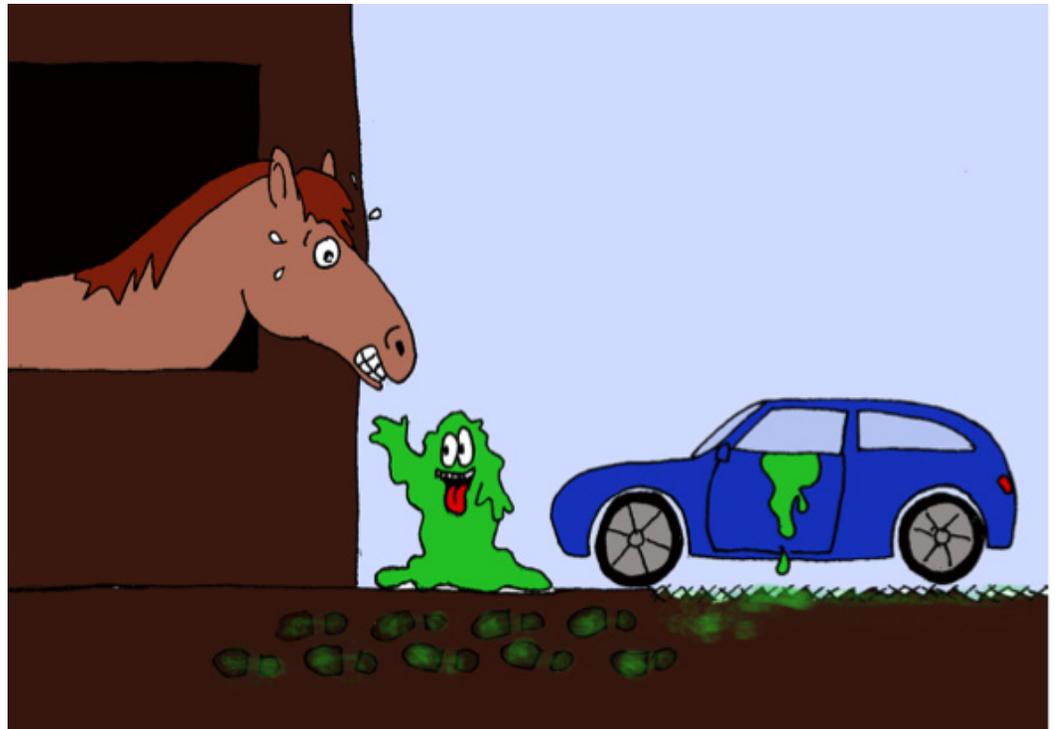


What's Bugging You?

More than just a nuisance, flies and mosquitos are vectors for many diseases such as pigeon fever, West Nile virus, and equine infectious anemia. Decrease fly and mosquito populations by frequently removing manure from stalls, pens, and paddocks and eliminating standing water. Consider using fly control methods such as sprays, sheets, and masks to further protect horses.

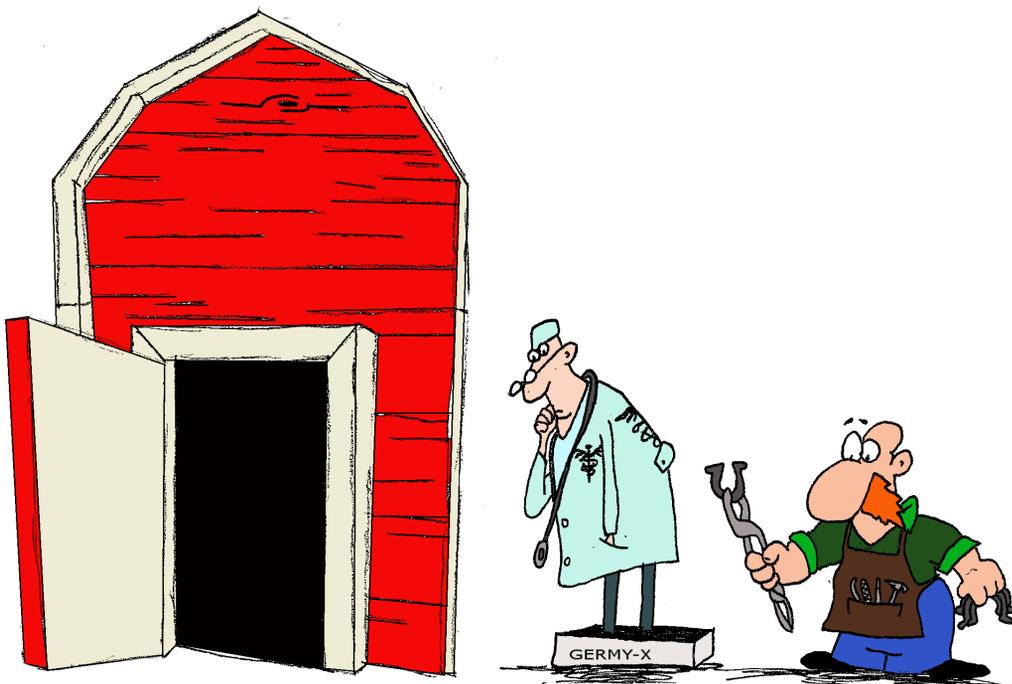
Stranger Danger!

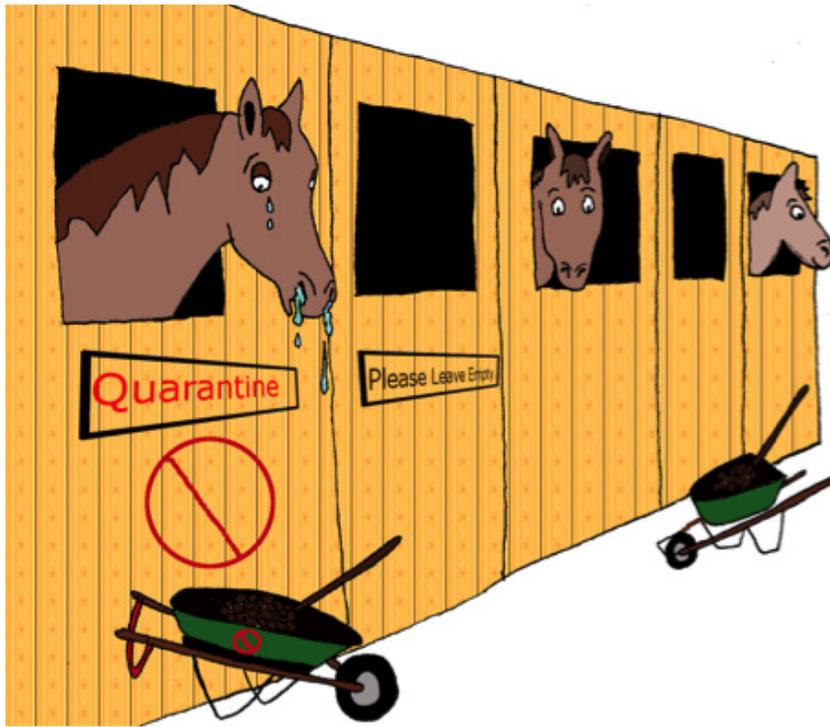
Restrict horse access to necessary visitors only. People can bring bacteria and viruses into your facility on their clothes, shoes, and vehicle tires. Provide a disinfectant foot bath and hand wash station for visitors. Set up and visibly label designated visitor parking areas and driveways to minimize outside vehicles entering animal traffic areas.



Friend or Foe?

Veterinarians and farriers have a high potential to bring germs because they handle many horses. Don't be afraid to ask about their disinfection protocols and request that they wash their hands thoroughly and disinfect their boots. If possible, schedule early appointments. Ask them to work with your healthy horses first, ending their visit with any horses that are showing signs of illness.





Time Out!

Quarantine new horses or any horses that have been exposed to outside horses (at horse shows or other organized events) for a minimum of three weeks. Treat quarantined horses as if they were ill: do not share equipment, feed them last, and wash your hands thoroughly before returning to healthy animals.

Hopefully these memes and themes will give you a mental reminder on how you can help your horse stay healthy. Check out the useful references and links listed below. These can help you assess your risk and develop your own biosecurity plan. In the meantime, these simple tips can keep your horse healthy or help prevent disease. By changing simple behaviors and practice at the barn, you can considerably decrease your chance of exposing your horse or others to disease. Make these *common sense* practices common place in your horse barn. Prevention is key to being disease free!

For questions regarding animal biosecurity, please contact the AZ State Veterinarian, Dr. Peter Mundschenk at 602-542-4293 or pmundschenk@azda.gov and the State Equine Extension Specialist, Dr. Betsy Greene at 520-626-3673 or betsygreene@email.arizona.edu

References

1. Ather, J. and E.A. Greene. 2004. "Tools for Promoting Biosecurity in Equine Facilities." UVM. 91 pages.

Other Useful Resources

University of Guelph
<http://equineguelph.ca/Tools/biosecurity.php>

Alberta Equestrian Federation
<http://www.albertaequestrian.com/Biosecurity/>

AAEP Biosecurity Guidelines: <http://www.aaep.org/custdocs/BiosecurityGuidelinesFinal030113.pdf>

UC Davis Veterinary Medicine

http://www.chrb.ca.gov/misc_docs/biosecurity_2011.pdf

Busselman, D., Mook, N., Darrington, J., Mastellar, S., Greene, E., and Bott, R. 2016. "Establishing Biosecurity on Horse Farms." SDSU Extension Fact Sheet. (In Press)



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