



Guidelines for the horse industry to minimize the spread of equine influenza

*Modified by PIRSA Animal Health 27 Aug 2007, from NSW Dept Ag factsheet
1800 675 888*

EI infection controls for equine dentists, farriers and other horse industry workers

If you have to visit any stable or horse property while there are controls in place for equine influenza (August 2007 onwards), there are **essential** procedures you need to follow.

In addition, check with PIRSA <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/horse/influenza> for the areas that you need to visit to see whether you need a permit to transport equipment or other items.

Equine influenza is a highly contagious disease which can be transmitted by humans. If you have had contact with any suspect horses, **you must decontaminate yourself** before you come in contact with other horses.

Equine influenza is highly contagious

EI is a highly contagious viral disease which spreads rapidly through susceptible horse populations. Affected horses not previously vaccinated will show a high fever, nasal discharge, a persistent hacking cough, and can be depressed and off their feed. Transmission primarily occurs from horses coughing (respiratory route).

Between premises, infection can be transferred by contaminated horse transport vehicles, equipment, stablehands, veterinarians, trainers, and anyone who has close contact with affected horses.

Follow the following recommendations to ensure you do not transmit the infection.

High level personal quarantine measures

Anyone who may have had contact with any suspect horse **must** decontaminate themselves before coming into contact with horses from other areas. There is an urgent necessity for high level personal quarantine, as EI can be carried with skin, clothing, footwear and gear.

Disinfection chemicals

EI is a fragile virus that can be killed by most disinfectants and even household detergents. Thorough scrubbing of hands and equipment, and then spraying equipment with disinfectant such as Lysol, Dettol, Hibiclens etc will destroy the virus. However the virus can persist on surfaces clothes, rugs and footwear for over 24 hours, and in water troughs for up to 22 days.

Thorough biosecurity measures

PIRSA suggests that all horse health care providers - farriers, equine dentists, horse masseuses, strappers, feed suppliers and other individuals visiting stables or horse properties - observe these measures very carefully and strictly.

1. Visit only one stable or horse property per day at the very maximum. Refrain from working at all if large numbers of horses are being infected anywhere in the country, so you do not add to the risks.
2. before the visit, enquire as to whether any horses are showing signs of respiratory disease, ie cough, runny nose , off feed , elevated body Temp (Normal 37.2 to 37.8).If the answer is **No**, proceed with the visit if necessary, if **yes** – contact PIRSA first for advice and a risk assessment.
3. Keep scrupulous records of all stable or horse property visits
 - contact names and phone numbers of property and horse owners/managers
 - names of horses treated or handled at each location.
4. Park your vehicle well away from where the stable employees usually park. EI can be carried from property to property on dirty footwear.
5. Wear disposable/removable protective clothing (such as overalls or a dust jacket). As you leave the property or stable, pack this clothing in an airtight bag, and then go home

and have a good shower, especially if you need to visit another horse property. Put on clean clothes. Wash the protective clothing everyday.

6. Don't touch any sick horses – not even a pat. This is a highly contagious disease.
7. **delivering feed or other supplies:**
 - deliver straight to feed stores, do not handle or pat horses ,tack, rugs or equipment, and disinfect yourself and spray the wheels of the vehicle using a garden sprayer and a disinfectant.
 - On Infected or Suspect premises, deliver to the property entrance only, disinfect yourself and the vehicle, as above.
8. If you see what you believe is a sick horse, strongly suggest to the owner that they ring their vet or the emergency disease hotline (**1800 675 888**) immediately.
9. Follow disinfection procedure as per the [Biosecurity Code](#) (see below). For high risk trades such as farriers and dentists, re-scrub all your tools, your bucket (outside as well), your boots, and any exposed skin which has been in direct contact with any horse. It is suggested that the final or second disinfection process be completed using a powerful multi-purpose disinfectant (e.g. Virkon® or similar) or any strong bleaching agent. This second disinfection process should be carried out in close proximity to your vehicle.

10. Dispose of all bio-hazards (such as caps, wolf teeth, and water/disinfectant from your first disinfection process) in the manure pit.

Biosecurity Code

Prevention of disease spread is always the most effective and least expensive means of control. An important way that infectious diseases of horses such as equine influenza can be spread is by the movement of contaminated people, clothing, footwear and equipment.

Biosecurity procedures are routine practices designed to prevent diseases entering a group of horses and for containing diseases in the event of an outbreak. An alternative term is **best health practice**.

About this Code

Equine dental technicians carry a high responsibility for biosecurity as they handle horses which are widely dispersed throughout the horse industry. They visit a variety of large and small horse enterprises daily, have direct contact with horses and their body discharges and use the same equipment on multiple animals. They may also visit farms on which livestock other than horses are present. The code of conduct for equine dental technicians includes the following provisions. Many of these provisions are applicable to all horse health workers.

Movement records

Keep an accurate record of your daily movements so that, in the event of a disease outbreak, the horses and worksites visited can be traced.

Note that during a disease emergency your movements may be regulated.

Hygiene

- Arrive with neat, clean, protective clothing, boots and equipment
- Keep vehicle interiors neat and clean; leave your dog at home.
- Keep fingernails short.
- Wash hands and forearms between handling groups of horses.
- Use a clean dry disposable towel for drying hands.
- Clean and disinfect equipment such as tooth rasps, gags and twitches before leaving each worksite.
- Use an appropriate disinfectant in the correct concentration – read the label!
- Regularly remove rasp blades from handles, scrub, disinfect and dry.
- Change protective clothing before travelling to another worksite if you contact horses suspected to be suffering from infectious disease.

Equipment and clothing

Use plastic, PVC, stainless steel and other products that can be easily cleaned and disinfected. Avoid wooden handles on rasps and leather straps on gags.

Use protective clothing and footwear that can be removed and laundered/disinfected if necessary.

Avoid footwear with a deep tread from which debris cannot be easily removed.

Carry a change of protective clothing and footwear.

Disposal of biological waste

Ask the client or vet to take responsibility for disposal of biological waste such as 'caps' or when a vet prescribes/supplies drugs for sedation of a client's horse.

Encourage clients to place sharp objects such as used hypodermic needles in a rigid, puncture-proof container. Never put sharp objects out in ordinary garbage.

Sequence of work

To avoid spreading disease from adult to young horses, when attending studs (if practical) work with mares with younger foals first, then yearlings and finally other adult horses.

In racing stables, work with recently introduced horses last (if practical).

If an infectious disease (such as equine influenza) is known to be present, work first with healthy horses, then in-contact horses and handle sick horses last.

If practical, defer dental attention to horses with infectious disease until they have recovered or visit the place as the last call of the day.

Communication and education

Discuss biosecurity procedures with clients, particularly the reasons for the preferred sequence of work. Ask if there is anything unusual to be aware of before beginning work. Be aware of and follow any additional client expectations. Ensure adequate instruction on biosecurity is given to staff and students.

International travel

Comply with all quarantine requirements when travelling to work internationally.

Take appropriate precautions to prevent international spread of infectious diseases by equipment or clothing.

Look. Check. Ask A Vet

Always check for obvious signs of infectious disease when handling horses.

Be aware that weight loss, slobbering, mouth ulcers and dropping food from the mouth may be caused by other than dental problems.

Be alert for unusual signs, behaviour or rapid spread of disease.

Tell the client if anything unusual is detected and advise them to contact their veterinarian.

If an infectious disease is suspected, advise the client to isolate the suspect horse/s and seek immediate veterinary attention.

If the client agrees, contact the client's veterinarian to discuss the case.

If a disease notifiable under legislation is suspected, advise the client of their legal obligations and of your own legal duty to advise their veterinarian (or a Government Veterinary Officer) of your observations.

If an exotic disease is suspected, not leave the property until advised to do so.

Remember some horse diseases can affect humans e.g. ringworm, Hendra virus, glanders.

Source: From the Biosecurity Code of Practice for Equine Dental Technicians prepared by the Equine Dental Association of Australia.