

Creating a Specific Biosecurity Plan To Maintain the Health of Your Racehorses



Optimizing health of the racing yard is the responsibility of all and communication is the key. The new National Farm-Level Biosecurity standard is full of useful information to help you create a biosecurity plan specific to your facility.

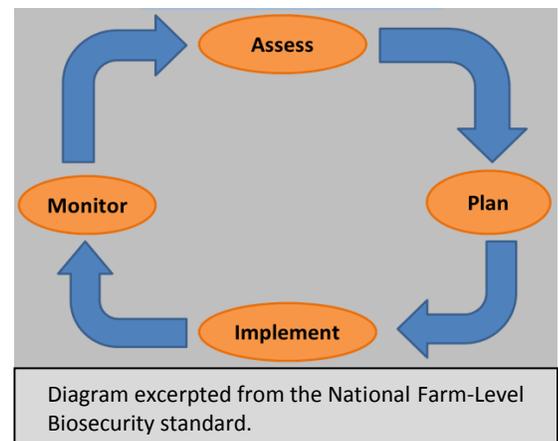


Your plan will help protect the health of your horses by examining the details of how you can minimize risks of disease transmission. It should include the training of staff, expectations from service providers, visitors and owners. Your plan should also address access, traffic control, separating new arrivals, pasture management, disinfection routines and more.

Once committed to paper; make sure it is not left to collect dust on a shelf.

When it comes to biosecurity, there will always be a cycle of activity:

- Assessing – review your biosecurity risks on an ongoing basis
- Planning- your written plan will form the base of training and will address the risks
- Implementing – addressing biosecurity risks
- Monitoring – early detection and monitoring of disease includes keeping records of illnesses and treatments. Gather disease and pest information to evaluate the plan and identify new risks.
- Reassessing the risks – Just as every racing yard will have a different biosecurity risk; every facility will go through change which will impact their plan.



Work with your veterinarian and industry experts to help develop your infection control plan.

Six Steps to help develop your Facilities Biosecurity Plan:

1. **Identify the risks** – including diseases in the local area, at tracks you will visit and those that could be brought in by visitors
2. **Prepare a diagram of the facility** – You will be able to identify the potential for horses to come into contact with sources of disease from other animals, people and equipment with the help of sample diagrams in the National Farm-Level Biosecurity standard.

Mark down:

- property boundaries, fences and gates
- location of neighbouring properties with horses or livestock
- laneways, pathways, parking locations and traffic routes
- pasture, animal housing, arena and training areas
- storage locations for bedding, feed, manure and garbage
- water sources, watering and feeding locations

Review the diagram and create a list of the biosecurity concerns.

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3. **Review management practices and perform ongoing evaluations** (annex 3 of the standard includes a detailed seven page Self-evaluation checklist for risk assessment).

Some of the practices are as simple as:

- asking people to wash their hands before handling your horse
- minimizing the presence of rodents and insects by keeping feed secure and eliminating standing water
- not using communal water sources or sharing equipment
- knowing how to take vitals and knowing normal baselines
- monitoring health and calling the vet without delay if signs of infectious disease are present such as: reduced appetite, depression, fever, nasal discharge, coughing, diarrhea, or acute onset of neurologic distress.
- Creating a vaccination schedule and having ongoing discussions with your veterinarian as to which diseases are of concern in your local and areas that you plan on visiting with your horse(s).



Others factors may be more complex but are just as important to your biosecurity plan:

- fixing deteriorating fences or broken equipment
- eradicating water runoff that arrives with spring thaws and summer rains

4. **Identify biosecurity goals and best practices** – Use the information from the diagram and self-evaluation to identify the challenges and risks that could impact your horses health.

5. **Develop an implementation strategy** – Prioritize short term and long term goals. Be sure to clearly communicate your biosecurity plan to all visitors, service providers, boarders and staff.

6. **Review effectiveness of the plan and improve** – Herd health records are once source to utilize when reviewing the effectiveness of the biosecurity plan. Be ready to design and implement improvements to the plan when reassessing your risks.

This fact sheet was assembled with information from the National Farm-Level Biosecurity standard. The committee for the standard was comprised of equine owners, subject matter experts, provincial government officials, representatives from regional and sector-specific equine industry organizations, the public sector and academics; including representatives from Equine Guelph. [Follow this link to view the draft copy.](#)

Start communicating and post Equine Guelph's complimentary **BIOSECURITY POSTER**
http://www.equineguelph.ca/pdf/facts/EquineBiosecurityPoster_%20Oct2015.pdf

One of the goals of the National standard is to assist horse owners and custodians in protecting the health and welfare of their horses by minimizing the transmission of contagious diseases and reducing the frequency and severity of disease if infection occurs.



Stay tuned for the next fact sheet which will discuss **access management**, including best practices for moving a horse; whether it be a trip to the races or simply moving the horse to a new location within your racing yard.