

CONTROL OF CONTAGIOUS DISEASE

by Dr. Laura Harris

While vaccination is our most common and traditional tool for controlling contagious disease, farm management also plays a critical role in the control of infection and spread of communicable disease. Primary goals of farm management include: 1) keeping disease from reaching the farm, 2) isolating exposed incubating or acutely sick animals, 3) maintaining the resident farm population in a manner that allows these horses to resist infection when exposed.

1) Keeping disease off the farm:

- a) Vector control – control flies, mosquitoes, and birds or rodents that can spread disease.
- b) Require all incoming animals (including horses, foals, donkeys and mules) to be pre-vaccinated and dewormed according to the routine farm program – no exceptions!
- c) Ideally all new residents would be initially quarantined from the general population for 2 to 4 weeks. If this is not possible, keep new residents away from high risk individuals such as foals or pregnant mares.

2) Isolation of exposed or sick animals:

- a) If an animal is actively sick, do not allow it in contact with any other horses. An isolation stall (away from all others) is ideal.
 - 1) When an isolation stall is not available, keep the sick animal in a stall that does not allow shared water and feed or nose-to-nose contact.
 - 2) Do not move the sick horse to other areas of the farm unless the move is to an isolation stall.
 - 3) Keep the stall floor/ bedding/ walls/ clean so that disease cannot be carried by flies, etc.
 - 4) Feed and clean the sick horse last so that the caretaker does not carry disease to the next horse touched.
- b) Keep groups of horses separate.
(within the farm population keep groups separate to prevent spread of disease between animals with different outside exposure levels)
 - 1) Permanent resident broodmares and their foals are one group. They should have minimal to no exposure to outside horses.
 - 2) Show and performance animals that leave the farm and return to the farm are another group. They may bring disease back to the farm with them.
 - 3) Outside horses that come onto the farm short term for breeding or training make up a third group. These animals should be pre-vaccinated and dewormed and stabled apart from group #1 (above).

- 3) Maintain good baseline health on the farm:
(good body condition, reduced stress, vaccinations and deworming)
- a) Good diet based on the function of each horse and their individual needs.
 - b) Maintain normal body weights.
 - c) Appropriate shelter for environmental conditions.
 - d) Readily available clean water – water temperature, smell and taste should be monitored
 - e) Routine vaccination and deworming program appropriate to the geographic area and the demands placed on the horses – appropriate for the anticipated or possible disease exposure risks.

No farm is exempt from the occurrence of contagious disease, It is important to minimize exposure, to work actively to control disease spread once illness is recognized on the farm, and to maximize baseline health status to reduce incidence of active disease when exposure occurs.