



# Biosecurity on the Trail

*by Bonnie Simpson  
Equestrian Trail Advisor*

Horse owners have a responsibility to keep their horses and farms safe from infectious diseases. Taking precautions to avoid the spread of disease, also known as biosecurity, reduces the chances that infectious disease will be carried onto or spread from or within a farm. The potential for the spread of disease is much higher when new horses are introduced to a herd, horses travel to horse shows or when horses meet each other on the trail. Simple things like sharing water buckets, brushes or trailers can increase the chances for contamination; therefore, it is extremely important that riders think ahead before moving their horse, hitting the trail or visiting other farms.

The following biosecurity measures will limit the risk of potential contamination:

- ▶ Always use your own water buckets and always draw the water from a tap and not a trough. If you stop to water your horse at a stream, ensure your horse drinks upstream.
- ▶ Don't allow your horse to touch other horses. Keep at least two horse lengths between horses even when stopping to visit.
- ▶ When picketing, keep enough space between your horse and the next horse so they can't share food or touch one another.
- ▶ Avoid lending tack, but if you do, be sure to disinfect all pieces before using it on your horse.
- ▶ Keep alcohol wipes or hand sanitizer in your truck, tack trunk, saddle bag, etc. Ask other riders and fellow trail users to sanitize their hands before touching your horse.
- ▶ Disinfect horse trailers that haul a variety of horses after each transport. Use a strong disinfecting agent like iodine or a product designed for farms. Many household disinfectants, such as Lysol, have no effect on equine diseases. Your vet will be able to recommend an adequate product.
- ▶ People can transfer infectious diseases on contaminated clothes and boots. Always remember to disinfect barn clothes and boots before and after entering new barns, trailers, paddocks, etc.
- ▶ Set up a disinfecting station at the entrance of your barn for visitors to sanitize boots, clothes, hands, etc.
- ▶ Facilities that offer overnight camping or stabling should separate these areas from the main barn and horses that live on the property. All facilities should include a quarantine area for new horses arriving.
- ▶ Stay up to date and informed about the equine diseases that are prominent in your area and areas where you intend to take your horse. Ensure that you vaccinate your horses accordingly.

Take the necessary precautions and do your best to avoid the spread of disease; however, if your horse or barn does become infected, don't be ashamed. Work with your vet to isolate the outbreak and let your neighbours and riding partners know as soon as possible so that they can act quickly to take the necessary precautions.

For more information about biosecurity please visit [www.equineguelph.ca](http://www.equineguelph.ca) or [www.omafra.gov.on.ca](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca).