

Hands on against disease

Follow these simple steps to help horses stay fit and healthy:

Ask questions:

always obtain a full history of a new horse on the yard before it arrives.

Hygiene:

maintain good personal hygiene, avoid sharing equipment between horses, clean housing and equipment regularly and thoroughly disinfect between horses.

Mixing:

avoid exposing your horse to unfamiliar horses or those with an unknown health status.

Isolation:

a new horse on the yard should be isolated for three weeks before being integrated with the other horses. Any horse suspected of carrying a disease should be isolated immediately.

Routine health care:

ensure all horses on the yard are up-to-date with their routine health treatment such as vaccinations and worm control measures. Use a health planner to keep track.

Take action:

If you suspect your horse has a disease, isolate it immediately and contact your vet for advice.



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Like us, you care about safeguarding the future health and welfare of your horse, or the horses you look after. Caring for your horse includes protecting them against the threat of disease.

With the increasing popularity of riding as a sport and leisure activity, more and more horses are being moved throughout the UK and Europe. This movement means that our horses are exposed to the threat of disease more than ever. Movement includes competing at the local show, importing a horse from abroad or simply coming into contact with new horses. As owners and carers of horses we can no longer ignore this threat.

The subject of disease can cause a great deal of concern and stress for any horse or stable yard owner. What's more, the stigma attached to disease can sometimes lead to a breakdown in communication because owners are worried about telling people that their horse is ill. We need to work together to remove this stigma so we can be open about disease and tackle it successfully.

World Horse Welfare has produced this pack to provide useful advice on how to protect horses and yards from the threat of disease. The aim is to prevent or minimise disease outbreaks and to keep our horses in peak condition.

Please join us and help to protect the UK's horses.

What is disease?

In its broadest sense 'disease' means a lack of health. A disease is a condition that causes the body to function abnormally, which may result in a variety of symptoms.

Some diseases are the result of a fault within the body (e.g. genetic disorders, auto-immune disease) and therefore cannot be spread to other animals.

Other diseases are spread by germs that can be picked up from items in a horse's environment (e.g. soil, flies, other horses). These are known as infectious diseases and we are looking to prevent these by implementing the measures outlined in this pack.

Examples of infectious but non-contagious diseases (diseases that cannot be spread from one horse to another) include tetanus and West Nile Virus.

Diseases that can be spread directly from one horse to another (e.g. through direct contact, as water droplets in the air, on contaminated

equipment, clothes, hands, etc) are known as contagious diseases. Examples of these include strangles and ringworm.

Horses don't always show signs of disease. They can be carriers of certain diseases (e.g. strangles) and therefore infectious to other horses, without showing symptoms. For this reason, it is vital to have a full-record of previous ill health or contact with sick horses.

Whilst some diseases may cause obvious severe illness, others may go relatively unnoticed. For this reason it's essential that you get to know what's normal for your horse and check regularly for any changes. The first sign of disease may be nothing more than a slight change of behaviour or reduction in performance.

Remember, even relatively minor diseases may affect your horse's well-being and ability to work – just think about how you feel when you have a cold.

By following the advice provided in this pack you will not only be protecting your horse from disease but also helping to ensure that he or she feels and looks in peak condition.



Keep your horse happy and healthy by preventing the spread of disease

Why should we prevent the spread of disease?

- To protect our horses against illness or death.
- To safeguard the health and welfare of our horses and the local equine population.
- To maintain performance and ensure a long active working life for our horses.
- To protect the national horse population from the risk of a serious disease outbreak or epidemic.
- To protect human health – a number of horse diseases can also cause illness in humans (e.g. ringworm, salmonella).
- To avoid the worry, strain and distress of having an ill horse, or worse still, the heartache of losing your horse.
- To avoid unnecessary vet bills.
- To avoid the increased workload, time and cost required to care for a sick horse.
- To avoid negative impact upon yards – disease can lead to increased workload, loss of business and loss of revenue. A serious disease outbreak could result in restricted movement of horses on and off of the yard.



How is disease spread?

Contact with contaminated surfaces, materials, substances and animals, which can include:

- **Direct contact between horses.**
- **Direct contact with other animals (e.g. livestock, dogs, cats, wildlife) and humans.**
- **By vectors (e.g. biting flies, mosquitoes, ticks).**
- **Through the air (e.g. coughing, snorting).**
- **Waste products (e.g. urine, faeces).**
- **Bodily fluids (e.g. blood, semen, saliva).**
- **Equipment (e.g. buckets, tack, rugs, brushes).**
- **Mare to foal (e.g. across the placenta, via milk).**
- **Shared water and/or feed.**
- **Contaminated feed, forage, water or bedding.**
- **Vehicles (e.g. horse transport, personal car).**
- **Clothing and boots.**
- **Housing, fencing and exercise areas.**
- **Watercourses, run-off and dung heaps.**

How can we prevent disease?

- By being aware of diseases and how they are spread.
- By maintaining good hygiene at all times (e.g. washing hands, clothes and equipment).
- Through good routine health care, including a regular vaccination and worm control programme.
- Through proper record-keeping (e.g. vaccinations, worm control programme, movement of horses onto and off of the yard).
- By preventing horses of unknown health status mixing.
- By isolating ill horses, horses new to the yard and horses that may have been exposed to disease (e.g. at shows, sales or other events).
- Through prompt veterinary treatment of disease.
- Through communication and cooperation with other owners.
- By contacting your vet, who will inform the local Animal Health Office, if a notifiable disease is suspected.



If you suspect that your horse has a disease, you should contact your vet

Play your part

Follow the guidelines in our information pack to help protect your horse and yard from the threat of disease.

Spread the word, not the disease: talk to other owners about disease; encourage others to protect their horses from disease; hand out our information packs to people on your yard. Use the contact details below to obtain additional World Horse Welfare information packs.

World Horse Welfare has put together a Health Planner to pin up outside your horse's stable, which will help you keep track of your horse's routine health care.

Where can I find out more?

From this pack, which includes:

- Fact sheets ('How to protect your horse from disease'; 'Isolation'; 'Key UK diseases'; 'Notifiable diseases')
- A Health Planner for your horse
- A poster to help other horse owners in your area

By contacting World Horse Welfare on 01953 498682, emailing us info@worldhorsewelfare.org or visiting www.worldhorsewelfare.org

Information is also available from the following websites:
www.defra.gov.uk (information for England)
www.scotland.gov.uk (for Scotland)
www.wales.gov.uk (for Wales)
www.dardni.gov.uk (for Northern Ireland)
Download the Horseracing Betting and Levy Board's Codes of Practice from www.hblb.org.uk

'Horses' means all horses, ponies, donkeys, mules and hinnies.

How to protect your horse from disease

Sadly, disease is an everyday reality; most people will either have had a horse that's been directly affected by disease or will know of someone whose horse has been affected. You only have to think how easy it is to pick up bugs yourself – colds, flu, stomach bugs. Protecting your horse doesn't have to be difficult or costly. If we all work together, we can protect our horses by following some basic everyday principles.

Clean and tidy

One of the most important elements of protecting your horse and yard from disease is good hygiene (e.g. washing hands, clothes, equipment and surfaces).

It's essential to keep all equipment and utensils clean (e.g. grooming kit, feed and water buckets, headcollars, tack, rugs). Everything you use should be cleaned regularly, and disinfected before using on a different horse. Never share equipment between horses.

Stables and, if possible, field shelters, should be cleaned out daily and disinfected between horses. You must disinfect them after a horse has been ill, along with other equipment (e.g. water troughs, buckets, feed



Stables and field shelters should be cleaned and disinfected between horses

containers). Ideally any fencing and exercise areas that the horse may have had direct contact with should also be disinfected if possible. Ask your vet for advice about what additional measures you should take if your horse is ill.

Disposal of dung should ideally be undertaken daily if not more frequently from stables, shelters, fields and exercise areas. Dung heaps should be kept away from horses and watercourses.

Keep your feed room clean – spilt food encourages rodents. Ensure that any faecal matter and debris created by other animals and birds is cleaned away regularly too.

One of the easiest ways to spread disease from one horse to another is on clothing and boots. To combat this change and wash your outer clothes and clean and disinfect your boots regularly, especially if you've been around unfamiliar horses (e.g. at a different yard, at shows).

Vehicles can spread disease, whether it's your lorry, trailer or car. Lorries and trailers should have all dung and dirty bedding removed each time they are used and must be cleaned thoroughly and disinfected if different horses are to be transported in them. Avoid taking your car into yards if sick horses are present.

Never use a hypodermic needle on more than one animal and ensure that all materials used to treat sick



and injured animals are disposed of correctly (e.g. cotton wool).

Dogs, like us, can spread disease from one horse to another. Keep an eye on them and make sure they stay away from sick horses.

Out and about

Horses are naturally sociable animals and are happiest when kept with other horses, but avoid allowing your horse to come into direct contact with unfamiliar or sick animals (e.g. when hacking, changing grazing, moving premises, at shows, sponsored rides, hunts, other events). Be aware of the movements of other horses on the yard too and try to avoid direct contact between your horse and any horses that may have been exposed to disease (e.g. at shows, sales or other events).

New arrivals

If you're taking your horse to a new yard it's worth finding out about the yard's routine health care (e.g. vaccination, worm control), disease prevention and control procedures, record keeping, general background and history. A few questions early on may save a lot of heartache later.

If you're managing a yard or buying a horse, it's vital to find out background information about new arrivals (e.g. health status and history of ill health, where the horse has been previously kept and for how long, any recent outings the horse has made where it may have mixed with other animals of unknown health status).

It's also important to check the records and paperwork of any new arrivals (e.g. vaccination, worm control). Look at

their passport before arriving and make sure it's up-to-date and includes the horse's vaccination history. You should check the animal against its passport when it arrives to make sure they match.

If you are taking your horse overseas, or buying or importing a horse from abroad, check that it has been inspected by a vet both before departure and on arrival.

When the new horse arrives at the yard, it's worth checking it over yourself to ensure that it's healthy at this point (e.g. normal respiration, condition, skin, droppings, behaviour).

The new arrival should be wormed and vaccinated, unless clear veterinary evidence is presented indicating that this has been done recently.

Remember horses can sometimes be infected with a disease without showing any obvious symptoms, particularly in the early stages. For this reason, all new arrivals should be treated the same as sick horses and isolated away from other animals for 21 days. This will reduce the risk to other horses should the new horse be carrying a disease. You should follow isolation procedure for this time until you're satisfied that the horse is



Find out the history of any new additions to your yard

disease-free. Ideally the horse should be able to see other animals but not come into direct contact with them. This includes separate air space, which means keeping them out of the range of droplets that may pass through the air when a horse snorts or coughs.

Use separate equipment for each new horse. In an ideal world one person would care for this horse. Disease spread can be reduced by wearing overalls when handling the new horse. You should remove your overalls, wash your hands and clean and disinfect your boots before handling other horses.

You should call your vet for advice if the new horse shows any signs of disease.

Horse related

Get to know your horse's normal behaviour (e.g. general demeanour, eating and drinking patterns, habits, posture and movement, interaction with other animals such as aggression or submission).

Make sure you're familiar with your horse's vital signs, so that you know what's normal (e.g. temperature, pulse, respiration, gut sounds, skin pinch test for dehydration, coat, health, body weight and condition, urine, faeces). You should carry out daily health checks on your horse and make a note of any changes because these may be the first sign of disease.

Grooming gives you the ideal opportunity to check your horse over thoroughly (e.g. for scabs, hair loss, lumps, respiration, skin parasites).

Pick out your horse's feet regularly to ensure that bedding and other materials aren't transferred from



Get to know what is normal for your horse and keep a note of any changes

one place to another, as this is a potential route to spreading disease.

Provision of appropriate fodder and fresh clean water will help to maintain your horse's general health and therefore reduce the risk of disease. Feed and water buckets or troughs should be cleaned out regularly and always between different horses or groups of horses.

Vet and owner contact details should be clearly available for each horse. If your horse is stabled it's a good idea to keep this information on a card outside the stable door so that it is immediately accessible in an emergency.

Routine health care

Talk to your vet for more information and advice about protecting you horse

A vaccination programme for tetanus and flu should be in place for all horses at the yard, with clear up-to-date records available when required.

Ensure a worm control programme is in place. This should include use of wormers or faecal egg counts, dung clearance, paddock rotation and mixed grazing if possible.

General routine health care is essential to maintain a healthy horse that is able to fight infection.

Controlling vectors (e.g. mosquitoes, midges, flies) will help to reduce the risk of disease spread. Avoid turning horses out near to stagnant water where mosquitoes and midges thrive. Even small puddles of stagnant water can become vector breeding grounds, you can reduce this risk by regularly cleaning drains and guttering and reducing the number of sites where water can pool by removing items like old unused buckets. Use fly repellent, sheets and fringes during fly season.

Talk to your vet about a suitable health care plan for your horse and use the World Horse Welfare Health Planner to keep a record of it.

If your horse shows signs of disease:

• Call your vet for advice, providing detailed information about your horse's symptoms.

- Ensure you maintain good personal and general hygiene (e.g. by washing your hands, and cleaning your boots, clothes and equipment thoroughly).



• Make sure your horse can't come into contact with other horses and follow isolation procedures until your vet informs you otherwise.

- Have one set of equipment (e.g. grooming, feed and water buckets or troughs, mucking out equipment) for your horse until the illness is identified and subsequent action has been taken.

• Keep a record of the date that your horse first displayed signs of illness and any treatment provided by the vet. Record any recent outings (e.g. shows, hacks) and any contact with other horses.

- Follow your vet's advice and complete all courses of medication even if your horse appears better.

• Ensure any potentially infected material (e.g. bedding, discarded forage or feed, water) is disposed of safely. Ask your vet for advice about how to do this.

- Once your horse has been given the all-clear by the vet, make sure all equipment and housing is thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

• Make sure other owners on the yard know what's happening so that they can protect their own horses from the disease.

On this fact sheet 'horses' means all horses, ponies, donkeys, mules and hinnies.

One of the most important activities to help protect your horse and yard from the threat of disease is record keeping. This should include:

- Passport details
- Vaccinations
- Worm control (e.g. faecal egg counts, wormers)
- Information about significant changes in behaviour or health, including signs of disease
- Visits by the vet and any treatment
- Shows and outings or movement of horses on and off the yard
- New horses arriving at the yard
- Key dates in an isolation programme
- Dentistry, farriery and other routine care



Keeping your horse's records up-to-date is vital



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Isolation

The aim of isolation is to protect other horses from becoming infected if a horse is suspected of having a disease or if its health status is not known. Isolation allows time for clinical signs of disease to develop in new or potentially diseased horses, and for the outcome of diagnostic tests to be known.

If a horse's health status is not known (for example if it's a new addition to the yard) then it must be treated in the same way as a sick horse until you can be sure that it isn't suffering from an infectious disease. Horses returning from outings where they could have come into contact with diseased horses, particularly those that have travelled abroad, should also be isolated upon their return. You should be extra vigilant with imported horses, which might carry diseases not seen in the UK.

While not everyone has access to separate isolation facilities, it's still possible to implement isolation procedures that will help reduce the risk of diseases being introduced

or spreading. This pack will help show you how to do so with the facilities you have available.

- **The length and nature of isolation will vary depending on the disease in question. Your vet will be able to give you more specific advice regarding individual diseases. For new arrivals isolation should last at least three weeks.**

- In an ideal world, isolation facilities would be provided in a dedicated building away from other horses, with separate access, equipment, staff and an isolation paddock for turnout where appropriate. However such a set-up is rarely possible except on the largest yards.



- **Whatever facilities you have available, it's important to ensure that isolated horses do not come into contact with any other horses on the yard. Remember, some diseases can spread through the air so isolated horses should be kept at the maximum possible distance from other horses. This includes separate air space, which means keeping them out of the range of droplets that may pass through the air when a horse snorts or coughs.**

- Think about how you could isolate your horse with the facilities you have available. Even simple measures can make a big difference: for example, housing isolated horses in an end stable away from other animals and people. You should also consider what changes you could make to ensure that isolation can be carried out easily and effectively should a disease outbreak occur in the future. Discuss the possibilities with the yard owner and other horse owners.

- **If an isolation paddock is used, either for turnout of isolated animals or as an isolation area in itself, it is essential that the horse cannot come into direct contact with other animals. The horse should be kept at the maximum possible distance from other animals to prevent spread of disease through the air. This includes animals in adjacent fields or passing on roads and tracks.**

- Try to ensure that the number of people coming into contact with horses in isolation is kept to a minimum. Everyone who has contact with the horses should be aware of the yard's isolation procedure, which they should follow strictly.

- **Make sure everyone visiting the yard that could potentially come into contact with isolated horses is aware of the isolation area and why it is there. Unless they are there specifically to see the isolated horses (e.g. owner, vet), visitors should not enter the isolation area.**

- It is advisable to provide information signs to ensure everyone is aware of the risks of disease spread and the isolation procedure they must follow. At the very least an 'isolation area' sign should be displayed.

- **For routine management, horses in isolation should ideally be dealt with last. This will not only help prevent the spread of disease but will make things easier in terms of hygiene and care.**



If you suspect that your horse has a disease, implement an isolation procedure

- You should always wash your hands thoroughly using soap and water after any contact with horses in isolation, even if you've been wearing disposable gloves. In certain cases you will need to use an approved disinfectant capable of killing the specific germs responsible for that



Display signs around your isolation unit to ensure that everyone is aware

disease. Your vet will be able to advise you on appropriate products.

- **Boots should be cleaned thoroughly and disinfected immediately upon leaving the isolation area. A disinfectant footbath deep enough to cover your entire foot and ankle is recommended (e.g. a deep washing-up bowl). The contents of the footbath should be changed regularly because the disinfectant will not work if it's dirty. Disinfectant spray can be a useful alternative to a footbath. Remember to wash your hands after use though to avoid contamination from the spray bottle.**

- To prevent the spread of disease on clothing it is advisable to wear overalls that can be removed after contact with the isolated horse. Overalls should fully cover clothing.

- **Overalls should be removed after dealing with a horse in isolation and before moving to another area of the yard. Take care when removing overalls to ensure that the outside of the garment does not come into contact with your other clothing. Don't forget to clean and disinfect your hands**

and boots thoroughly afterwards. Ideally, overalls should only be used once for each horse or group of affected horses. They should be washed after use. Overalls that have been used and removed should not be used again until they have been washed.

- Your overalls, and any other unprotected clothing, should be washed at a temperature of at least 60°C in order to kill any harmful germs.
- **Never share equipment used for isolated horses with other horses on the yard. This includes everything from buckets and haynets to grooming and mucking out equipment. You must ensure that all equipment is thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before being used for another horse or leaving the isolation area. It may be easier to have a clearly marked and separate set of equipment purely for use in the isolation**



area so that there is no confusion. This equipment should be cleaned and disinfected regularly and always before using with another horse.

- It is vital to clean items thoroughly before disinfecting them because disinfectants won't work on dirty surfaces. Similarly, products such as alcohol hand gels will only work on clean hands.

- **Horses in isolation should not share water or feed with other horses.**

- All dung and waste material from sick horses must be disposed of carefully. Your vet will be able to give you advice.

- **Other animals, (e.g. dogs, cats, livestock, poultry) should be kept away from isolated horses.**

- Your isolation procedure should include accurate record keeping (e.g. onset of symptoms if relevant, treatments, isolation period, disinfectants used, etc).

- **Be extra vigilant with horses from outside the UK because they may be carriers of diseases not currently found in this country. Such diseases may take longer to diagnose due to their unfamiliarity and may infect more horses due to a lack of immunity in the horse population.**

- If disease is confirmed you will need to inform other horse owners at the yard and in the neighbouring area so they can take steps to protect their horses from infection. You will need to consider anyone else who will need to be informed (e.g. other vets who work at the yard, previous yard if the horse is a new arrival, event organisers if the horse has returned from an event). Routine record keeping will make this easier.

On this fact sheet 'horses' means all horses, ponies, donkeys, mules and hinnies.



Any new arrivals on a yard should be isolated for at least three weeks, regardless of whether they show signs of disease. During this time they should be treated in the same way as horses showing signs of disease.

It may also be necessary to isolate horses returning to the yard after a trip. This will need to be assessed on a risk basis bearing in mind factors such as where the horse has been, how long it was away, whether it came into direct contact with other horses, whether it shared air space with other horses and so on. Horses that have been abroad should always be isolated upon their return.



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Key UK Diseases

There are many diseases that can affect horses and the information available about these conditions can be confusing. We believe that better understanding of disease is crucial if we are to tackle the problem and reduce the worry it causes. As such we've provided simple details to help you recognise and understand some of the key infectious diseases in the UK. If your horse is showing any signs of disease you should contact your vet immediately.

Strangles

Strangles is a common and highly contagious bacterial infection of the respiratory system.

In rare cases the infection can spread to other organs of the body, known as 'bastard strangles'. Horses affected in this way may not survive.

The disease can be spread through direct contact with affected animals or indirectly on items like buckets and clothing. Signs of the disease include:

- Nasal discharge ('snotty' nose)
- Fever
- Depression
- Swollen lymph nodes and abscesses, mainly on the head and neck
- Loss of condition

Horses and particularly donkeys can be carriers of the disease without showing any signs; these animals can pass strangles on to others.

Good hygiene, isolation of new horses and minimising contact with horses of unknown health are the best ways to prevent strangles.

Equine Influenza

The equine flu virus, of which there are many types, is a highly contagious cause of respiratory disease.

The disease is spread by direct contact with infected horses, indirectly on items like buckets or clothing and through the air when a horse coughs or snorts.

Signs include:

- Nasal discharge
- Fever
- Depression
- Dry cough
- Rapid breathing

Occasionally the disease can lead to severe complications.

Equine flu is preventable by vaccination. You should ensure your horse is vaccinated every year, or every six months if your horse is particularly at risk (e.g. regularly mixing with new horses).

Tetanus

Tetanus, or 'lockjaw', is a rare non-contagious disease caused by bacteria commonly found in soil.

When these bacteria enter wounds they can multiply, releasing toxins that affect the nervous system. Signs include:

- Stiffness and difficulty moving, eating and drinking
- Sensitivity to light, noise and touch
- Muscle spasms
- Movement of the third eyelid across the eye
- Respiratory arrest and death

The disease is fatal in the majority of cases and therefore prevention is essential. Tetanus can be prevented by regular vaccination.

Equine Herpes Virus (EHV)

Equine Herpes Virus (EHV) is common worldwide. There are several strains of EHV but the most common are EHV-1 and EHV-4.

EHV-1 causes neurological disease, respiratory disease, abortion and death of newborn foals.

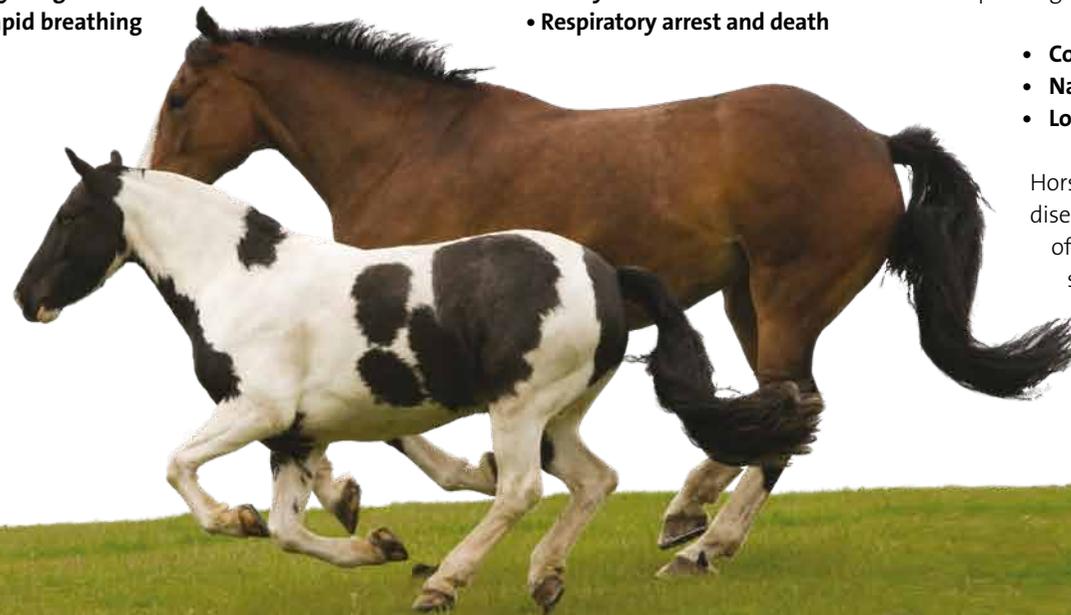
EHV-4 causes respiratory disease and, very occasionally, neurological disease and abortion.

Infection is transmitted through the air by coughing and snorting, through direct contact with contaminated material such as an aborted foetus and indirectly through contaminated items such as buckets and clothing. Signs vary greatly depending on the type but can include:

- Coughing
- Nasal discharge
- Loss of coordination

Horses can be carriers of the disease without showing signs of illness, although they are still infectious to other horses.

Good hygiene is key to preventing EHV. Vaccines are available but these do not guarantee total



protection, although they are recommended for animals used for breeding.

Ringworm

Ringworm is a contagious fungal disease that can be spread to humans and other animals.

Infection occurs through direct contact with an infected animal or indirectly through contact with contaminated items or environment. Signs include:

- **Raised patches of hair and hair loss**
- **Sore bald patches which turn grey and scaly**

It can be prevented by good hygiene and avoiding contact with animals that may be affected. The fungus that causes ringworm can survive for years on fences, gate posts and buildings, so extremely thorough cleaning and disinfection is essential to destroy it.

Salmonellosis

Salmonellosis is an infection caused by *Salmonella* bacteria that can affect humans and other animals.

Humans can be infected with *Salmonella* through contact with the dung of infected animals or by eating or drinking contaminated items. The effects of the disease on humans can range from mild diarrhoea to severe illness or even death. Children, the elderly and people with weak immune systems are at particular risk.

In horses, *Salmonella* bacteria can be present in the gut without causing any real problems until the horse is stressed, most commonly by surgery or transport. Mares can infect their newborn during

foaling. Infected horses can spread the bacteria via faeces even if they do not show signs themselves. Signs include:

- **Fever**
- **Diarrhoea**
- **Dehydration**

In severe cases horses may die within 24 hours. Prevention involves good hygiene and regular dung clearing.

Parasitic Infections

Parasites are responsible for many diseases in horses around the world. These diseases can be caused by internal parasites such as tapeworms, which live inside the body, or external parasites such as lice, which live outside of the body.

Symptoms and outcome can vary depending on the disease but some parasitic infections can cause severe illness or even death.

Worm control and external parasite control programmes, combined with good hygiene, are the best means of prevention.



In many cases, hygiene is the key to preventing the spread of disease



Notifiable Diseases

Notifiable diseases are those that must, by law, be reported to the local Animal Health Office if they're suspected. The major threat from these diseases is overseas. For this reason it's important to be particularly vigilant with imported horses or horses that have been abroad, to ensure that these diseases aren't introduced to the UK. This includes following strict isolation procedures for at least three weeks from the time the horse arrives at the yard. Always check that an imported horse has an up-to-date passport, relevant health and travel documentation¹ and has been examined by a vet before departure and on arrival in the UK.

If you suspect your horse has a notifiable disease you must immediately isolate the horse so it can't come into contact with any other animals and call your vet. Be sure to tell your vet that you suspect your horse has a notifiable disease. Your vet will examine your horse and, if they agree that a notifiable disease is likely, they will inform the local Animal Health Office who will send an official vet to examine your horse. What happens after that will depend on the particular disease, but you will be given clear instructions by the official vet.

Some notifiable diseases carry a compulsory slaughter order. This means that if your horse tests positive for the disease it must, by law, be put to sleep as soon as possible to prevent its suffering and the spread of the disease to other horses.

Remember that notifiable diseases are relatively uncommon. Many diseases share similar symptoms so the likelihood is that your horse will be suffering from something more common, although this doesn't mean that the level of care your horse receives should be any less. If we all remain vigilant we can prevent these diseases from entering or becoming established in the UK.

Above all, remember that reporting any suspected cases of disease to your vet is the key to controlling and stopping these diseases.

¹For details of what documentation is required (e.g. Animal Health Certificate, Journey Log) contact www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/farmanimal/welfare/transport/horse/index.htm

Equine Infectious Anaemia (EIA)

Equine Infectious Anaemia (EIA), or 'swamp fever', is a viral disease usually spread in blood or blood products.

An outbreak in the UK was confirmed in 2010 following the introduction of infected horses from other European countries; until then the disease had not been reported in the Britain since 1976.

Most commonly the virus is transmitted from one horse to another by biting flies but it can also be spread in other ways such as the use of dirty hypodermic needles, by equipment contaminated with infected blood or from mares to their unborn foals. Signs include:

- **Fever**
- **Depression, loss of appetite**



and weight loss

- **Increased heart rate and rapid breathing**
- **Loss of coordination**
- **Discharge from eyes and nose**
- **Diarrhoea**

Horses may be acutely affected and die rapidly from the disease, or they may be affected long-term and go through periods of illness interspersed with periods of good health. Some horses may be infected but show no apparent signs of the disease. All horses with EIA are a potential source of infection to others, even if they don't show any symptoms.

All horses that are found to be infected with EIA will have to be put to sleep.

The spread of EIA can only be prevented if affected horses are put to sleep; contact with vectors (e.g. horse, deer or stable flies) is reduced and good hygiene is maintained to ensure no horses come into contact with the blood of other horses.

African Horse Sickness (AHS)*

African Horse Sickness (AHS) is a very serious viral disease spread by midges. There are several different forms of the disease. Signs may include:

- **Fever**
- **Swelling, particularly around the head and neck**
- **Coughing, difficulty breathing and frothy nasal discharge**

In the most severe form, almost all affected horses die within a week. The best means of preventing AHS is to protect your horse from the midges that transmit the disease.

Equine Viral Encephalomyelitis (EVE, EEE, WEE, VEE)*

Equine Viral Encephalomyelitis (EVE) is a group of viral diseases spread by mosquitoes. The disease can affect humans but cannot be transmitted directly from horses to humans. There are three main groups of the disease; Eastern Equine Encephalomyelitis (EEE), Western Equine Encephalomyelitis (WEE) and Venezuelan Equine Encephalomyelitis (VEE). Signs include:

- **Depression and loss of appetite**
- **Sensitivity to noise and touch**
- **Head pressing, excitability, circling and restlessness**
- **Loss of coordination and muscle twitching**
- **Impaired vision**
- **Death occurs in many cases, particularly those horses infected with EEE.**

Protect your horses from mosquitoes in order to prevent the disease.

West Nile Virus (WNV)*

West Nile Virus is a non-contagious form of viral encephalitis spread by mosquitoes. It can affect humans but can't be spread directly from horses to humans or vice versa.

Symptoms are similar to EVE (above) and, like EVE, death occurs in many cases.

Disease risk can be reduced by minimising exposure to biting insects.

Equine Viral Arteritis (EVA)

Equine Viral Arteritis (EVA) is a contagious disease that can cause abortion in pregnant mares, and occasionally death in young foals.

The virus can be spread through the air, during mating or artificial insemination and through contact with contaminated equipment. It can also be passed from a mare to her unborn foal.

Clinical signs of the disease vary greatly but may include:

- **Swelling, particularly in the limbs or around the genitals in stallions**
- **Conjunctivitis**

Many horses show no apparent signs of illness but some stallions can become long-term carriers of the disease and can't be used for breeding. The vast majority of horses make a full recovery following infection.

EVA can be prevented by testing all horses intended for breeding and by only breeding from those free of the disease, by routine vaccination of stallions and good hygiene.

Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM)

Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM) is a contagious bacterial disease transmitted during mating. It can also be spread indirectly on contaminated equipment or by handlers if good hygiene measures are not followed.

Generally the only visible symptom is vaginal discharge in mares. Stallions infected with the disease don't usually show symptoms although they can still transmit the infection.

The disease can be prevented by good hygiene and by testing all horses used for breeding purposes. Any horses testing positive can't be used for breeding until they have been treated and are shown to be free of the disease.

Rabies*

Rabies is a fatal viral disease that can affect all mammals including humans. It's usually spread by the bite of an infected animal. Signs include:

- **Sudden behavioural changes**
- **Paralysis**

Once clinical signs appear, rabies is always fatal.

Prevention of rabies is possible by following correct procedures when importing horses from countries where the disease is present and control of the disease where it occurs in wild animals.

Dourine*

Dourine is a parasitic disease transmitted during mating or, occasionally, from mares to their foals. Signs include:

- **Genital swelling and discharge**
- **Weight loss, which may be severe**
- **Loss of coordination and weakness**

The disease can be fatal. Horses may be carriers without displaying symptoms.

Dourine can be prevented by ensuring that affected horses, or horses suspected of infection, are not used for breeding.

Glanders / Farcy*

Glanders is a serious bacterial disease that can be passed to humans and other animals. In humans the disease is almost always fatal if left untreated.

The disease is usually spread by contaminated food or water, or through contact with contaminated equipment.

There are different forms of the disease but signs may include:

- **Coughing, nasal discharge and difficulty breathing**
- **Nodules under the skin that may become ulcers**

When the disease affects mainly the nostrils, glands and lungs it is known as 'glanders'. When it mainly affects the surface of the limbs and body it is known as 'farcy'.

Glanders is usually fatal; horses that recover remain a source of infection.

Taking a blood sample from horses before they are exported from countries where the disease is present will help to

prevent the spread of disease. Humane euthanasia of any horses testing positive for the disease will also reduce the number of horses infected.

Epizootic Lymphangitis*

Epizootic Lymphangitis is a contagious fungal disease, similar to glanders, that's spread by flies or contact with contaminated equipment. Signs include:

- **Nodules under the skin that may produce discharge and become ulcerated**
- **Hard, swollen glands**

If the disease reaches an advanced stage it becomes incurable and leads to death.

It can be prevented by good hygiene and protecting horses from flies.

Vesicular Stomatitis*

Vesicular Stomatitis is a viral disease that can also cause flu-like illness in humans who have been in contact with affected horses. It can be spread by biting flies, direct contact with affected

animals and contact with saliva or fluid from burst blisters. Signs include:

- **Drooling, loss of appetite and weight loss**
- **Blistering and ulceration of the mouth, nostrils, coronary band or teats**

The disease isn't usually fatal but causes severe illness in affected horses.

Good hygiene, protection against biting flies and isolation of affected animals are the only means of prevention.

Anthrax

Anthrax is a bacterial disease that can affect all animals including humans, but rarely affects horses. Infection usually occurs when horses graze on areas contaminated with bacterial spores, or eat contaminated feed. Signs include:

- **Colic, bloody diarrhoea**
- **Weakness**
- **Swellings, particularly a hot, painful swelling of the throat**
- **Sudden death**

The disease is usually fatal within a few days but it can be treated if it is caught early enough.

Anthrax can be prevented by appropriately disposing of affected carcasses and sterilisation of the contaminated environment.

On this fact sheet 'horses' means all horses, ponies, donkeys, mules and hinnies.

*not currently seen in the UK



Horse health planner

*I'm keeping my horse healthy
with the support of*



Owner name

Horse name

Height Weight.....

Age Sex.....

Contact numbers

Home	Work	Mobile
Owner
Name	Daytime	Out of hours
Vet.....
Farrier.....

Health notes

Notes on current conditions (e.g. prone to colic, laminitis).....

.....

Medication	Daily Dose	How administered	Date last administered	Time last administered

Note: Make sure passport records are up-to-date (e.g. vaccinations, medication)

Special management needs (e.g. feed, hay, other):

.....

Date arrived on yard Previous location.....

Contact details

Saddler.....

EDT

Physio.....

Other

Vital signs

Resting Heart Rate – The pulse is normally taken beneath the jaw. Count for 15 seconds and multiply this by four.

Temperature – The thermometer must be well lubricated before inserting it into the rectum. A reading normally takes one to three minutes. Keep firm hold of the thermometer at all times.

Resting Respiratory Rate – Watch for the outwards movement of the ribcage and belly with each breath. Count the number of breaths in 15 seconds then multiply by four to give breaths per minute

Your horse should not have recently undertaken strenuous activity.

If in doubt – consult your vet for advice

Normal Values:	Your horse	Normal range
Resting heart rate:	36-48 bpm
Resting respiratory rate:	8-16 breaths/pm
Temperature:	37-38.5°C

Routine health care for all horses:

Vaccinations – At least once every 12 months or as advised by your vet.

Worm management – To be carried out regularly, for example through faecal egg counts, use of wormers, and paddock management. Consult your vet for advice.

Footcare – Farrier or Farriers Registration Council qualified trimmer at least once every 6-8 weeks.

Dental Care – At least once every 12

months, or more frequently if required.

Use a vet or BEVA qualified Equine Dental Technician.

Saddler – At least once every 12 months to check saddle fit, and more frequently if required, or if horse's body shape changes. Check fit of new saddles after six months of use. Only use a qualified saddler.

Physio – As required, if there is any indication of pain or discomfort.

	Vaccinations	Worm management	Footcare	Teeth	Saddler	Physio/other	Competitions, shows, events etc
JAN							
FEB							
MAR							
APR							
MAY							
JUN							
JUL							
AUG							
SEP							
OCT							
NOV							
DEC							

World Horse Welfare receives no government funding and relies entirely on public donations. Please help in any way you can.

t: +44 (0)1953 498682
e: info@worldhorsewelfare.org
www.worldhorsewelfare.org

Registered charity no: 206658 and SC038384

