

British Equestrian Federation (BEF) Advice Sheet for Event Organisers in response to Equine Herpes Virus (EHV)

This advice sheet has been produced by the BEF in collaboration with British Dressage, British Eventing and British Showjumping and under the guidance of veterinary advisors John McEwen MRCVS and BEF Director of Equine Sports Science and Performance, Josh Slater, Professor in Equine Clinical Studies at the Royal Veterinary College and Jane Nixon MRCVS and BEF Director of Equine Development. All equestrian event organisers are strongly advised to make use of this information which serves as a guideline and should be used in conjunction with advice from their veterinary surgeon.

To set the context - EHV is a common virus, and under the prevailing circumstances, surveillance should be heightened. Different diseases are caused by the virus, the neurological type being the more serious but having the lowest incidence.

General Principles

Horse owners' vigilance will help to contain this disease and they take ultimate responsibility for the health of their horses. Owners should be fully aware of their horse's vital health signs, the symptoms of the disease published here: <http://www.bef.co.uk/Content.asp?PageID=1056>

In addition, event organisers should carry out a risk assessment (information here <http://www.bef.co.uk/Content.asp?PageID=1056>). This should take into account proximity to known positive cases (disease risk zones – see later), size of the event, and catchment area (whether local, national, or international) so that all mechanisms undertaken to control the disease are proportionate. Show organisers are advised to produce a communications plan in advance of the event should a positive case be found so that people who have been in attendance can have best advice as to how to care for their horses and minimise onward spread.

Key Points

- 1. Pre entry checks.** The show organiser may, at their discretion, contact owners/riders of horses which may have been in direct or indirect contact with a positive case in the last 28 days to advise them to remain at home and not travel to the event. Indirect contact includes contact through individual people and being stabled within 0.5 miles of a positive case. Organisers are strongly advised to counsel owners/riders to take the responsible course of action and not travel horses if they have the slightest doubt about health status
- 2. Entry checks.** Necessity for entry checks will be determined by your risk assessment. It may be that none are required for one day events in low risk zones with no onsite stabling and where horses do not come into direct contact with each other. At the opposite end of the scale, multi day events, with horses visiting from all over the country or overseas, with onsite stabling, especially if the event is in a moderate to high risk zone, should consider the necessity and feasibility of following precautionary measures:
 - Isolation/quarantine boxes (strongly recommended, especially for multi day events in high risk zones)

- Disinfectant foot baths and hand wipes at entry and exit points to areas where individuals come into direct contact with horses (usually stabling areas). Please use disinfectant foot baths only on the advice of your veterinary surgeon. If they are not deemed to be necessary, they may cause unnecessary alarm.
 - Health checks for horses at entry and exit points, looking out for nasal discharge and taking rectal temperature. Checks to be carried out within an enclosed environment by competent personnel, preferably owners in the case of rectal temperature
 - Stable disinfection and complete bedding change with the departure of each horse
 - Minimisation or eradication of the opportunity for horse to horse contact
 - Advise that handlers disinfect their hands in between handling different horses; ideally hands should be washed and then disinfected.
3. **Suspected infection.** A horse showing clinical signs of disease on arrival should be isolated. This is more likely to occur in a high risk area. Contact your veterinary surgeon to perform clinical checks, take and dispatch samples. The Animal Health Trust AHT in Newmarket provides a comprehensive and rapid package of diagnostic tests for equine infectious diseases and organisers should ask that their veterinary surgeon is fully aware of the AHT's sample collection and submission protocols ahead of the event.
 4. **Positive case.** Horse will remain in isolation. A suitable and secure isolation facility will need to be found if the horse is not, in the opinion of the treating veterinary surgeon, fit to travel. Implement communications plan to inform owners of horses which may have been in direct contact with the positive case of the actions they should carry out if their horse shows no signs at the present time, but may do following incubation.

Disease Risk Zones

High Risk – positive case of EHV1 neurological type within 28 days and within a 0.5 mile radius of the event or confirmed reports of EHV disease in areas where horses or people coming to the event are known to be travelling from

Moderate Risk – reports of EHV disease but not specifically in areas where horses or people coming to the event are known to be travelling from

Low Risk – no reports of EHV disease

Further information:

Biosecurity information sheet

Equine Herpes Virus factsheet

Risk assessments for equestrian events

All available at <http://www.bef.co.uk/Content.asp?PageID=1056>