

Code of Practice for Non-Thoroughbred Competition Horses for DOCOM use

Introduction

In accordance with Article 69 of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/688, in specific instances a horse may travel between consenting EU Member States on a DOCOM document instead of an Intra-Trade Animal Health Certificate.

This document specifies the minimum health requirements that a non-thoroughbred competition horse must meet in order to be considered eligible to travel on a DOCOM to and from Ireland.

Additional requirements, as detailed in Ireland's "General conditions for derogation from the requirement for health certification for registered horses to enter Ireland in accordance with Article 69 of Commission Delegated Regulation 2020/688" document may apply.

This Code of Practice may be subject to change.

Traceability and Documentation Requirements

1. The horse must be registered equine animal, and in possession of a single lifetime identification document ('equine passport') as provided for in Article 114(1)(c) of Regulation (EU) 2016/429.
2. The horse must be registered with the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI).

Vaccination Requirements

1. The horse shall have received a valid equine influenza virus vaccination, in accordance with FEI rules or manufacturers instructions, whichever is more stringent, and this vaccination must be recorded in the equine passport.
2. The horse shall have received a valid herpes virus vaccination according to manufacturer's instructions, and this vaccination must be recorded in the equine passport.
3. The horse is vaccinated against any other diseases as required by the FEI.

Health Visit Requirements

1. The horse is visited by a veterinarian at least twice a year, which must be documented and verifiable.

Biosecurity Practices (IHRB, 2023)

I. Management of the Horse Population

The most common way for an equine infectious disease to be spread to horses on a premises is when a new horse carrying disease arrives at a yard, or a horse returning to the yard after spending time elsewhere. For many diseases, the horse can be shedding the disease before showing any clinical signs. Therefore, the following biosecurity measures should be followed:

- **Quarantine area for new arrivals or returning horses.** A separate unit with a separate airspace to that housing resident horses is required. Stables at one end of the barn or block are not adequate as the airspace remains the same.
- **Isolate new arrivals from current residents for at least 10 consecutive days** and only integrate after this time if no signs of disease and or/ confirmed by your veterinary surgeon to have fully recovered from any disease during the quarantine period.
- **Closely monitor the horses** during quarantine so that any horse(s) that become ill can be identified early. Monitoring should include as a minimum: observation of general demeanour, recording twice daily rectal temperatures and paying attention to food and water intake and production of faeces and urine. Consult your veterinary surgeon for normal parameters.
- **Separate quarantine equipment** such as buckets, grooming kit and tack, easily identified as such e.g., different coloured equipment, coloured tags, coloured tape etc.
- **Separate staff if possible** for the horses in quarantine and a separate group of staff tend to the resident horses. Where this is not feasible quarantine horses should be tended to last and protective outer clothing worn to enter the quarantine facility, e.g. aprons, gloves, shoe covers etc. or at least separate overalls and shoes that are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and do not leave the quarantine area. Within quarantine exposed or at-risk horses should be tended to first and any sick horses tended to last.
- **Reduce insect vectors whenever possible**, by using insect screens over doors and windows, insect repellents and regular removal of manure/soiled bedding.
- **Care with dogs** - they can act as vectors for transmission of disease during an outbreak of infectious disease. As such dogs should always be kept out of a quarantine facility and should not be allowed to roam between stables during an outbreak.
- **Ensure all horses are appropriately vaccinated** and up to date with preventative treatment as required.

II. Management of Staff and Visitors

a) Staff

It's particularly important that staff **understand the principles of biosecurity** and **the importance of vigilance against infectious disease.**

- Staff must be trained in good hygiene practices, especially effective hand washing, use of hand sanitisers /gels and routine disinfecting of items.
- Staff must be familiar with the concept of quarantine for new arrivals and the close monitoring of both quarantined horses and horses returning from external engagements such as competition.
- Ideally member(s) of staff should be assigned to care for quarantined horses only (i.e., new arrivals or sick horses) and separate staff look after the healthy resident horses.

- If it is unavoidable that an individual must care for both groups of affected and unaffected horses, then the care of healthy animals should be carried out first, exposed animals next and affected horses last, followed by decontamination.
- Disposable gloves, barrier clothing and disposable boot covers should be used when working with quarantined horses, and after use be disposed of or laundered and disinfected. A disinfectant foot mat and a bin or clinical waste bag for used gloves and foot covers are essential.
- The quarantine unit should have a changing area for the staff, so that clothing and footwear worn in the restricted area are not worn elsewhere.
- Staff must be trained in monitoring the general health of horses (e.g., assessment of demeanour, monitoring feed and water intake, taking and recording of temperatures) and know when to seek veterinary attention.
- Trainers need to ensure that staff have access to the equipment that they need for basic health monitoring including thermometers, and a simple means of recording information e.g., notebook and pen or digital document.

b) Visitors

Visitors should not be given access to horses in quarantine.

Visitors should wear clothes and shoes that have not been worn on any other equine premises. If infectious disease is suspected or confirmed, the following measures are strongly advised:

- Non-essential access should be stopped.
- Maintain records of essential visitors to the premises with date, time, name, and purpose of visit recorded.
- Until the premises is declared free from disease, one entrance to the premises should be designated for use and all others temporarily blocked. This will facilitate compliance with disinfectant mats / foot dips as required.
- If individual vehicles for example those belonging to a farrier or veterinary surgeon are needed within close proximity of stables during a period of high risk, tyres can be sprayed with disinfectant and a footbath and shoe covers provided.

III. Management of the Environment

- Manure and bedding can be a source of disease. Soiled bedding on wheelbarrow and/ or tractor tyres can spread disease if these are not routinely cleaned and disinfected. Soiled bedding from the stables of sick or exposed horses should be placed in enclosed containers e.g., sealed clinical waste bags for incineration, and not onto open air muck heaps. Stables of sick or quarantined horses should be entered and mucked out last.

- Avoid use of blowers if disease suspected or confirmed – they are an effective means of rapidly disseminating infectious material throughout a barn or stable block. Vacuum systems that capture rather than physically move the material are preferable.
- All equipment should be regularly cleaned of organic debris and disinfected, especially if having to be used between horses, such as thermometers.
- Cleaning and disinfection should be carried out in an area with a solid surface and appropriate drain, with minimal through traffic. The area should itself be cleaned and disinfected at the end.
- Cloth items (saddle pads, towels, bandages etc) should be laundered and thoroughly dried between each use. To kill the fungal spores responsible for Ringworm infections, it will be necessary to include a disinfectant during laundering (e.g., Virkon™, Trigen™ or dilute bleach at a 1 in 40 concentration). Exposure to UV light e.g., simply drying outside on a bright, dry day is also helpful for killing fungal spores.
- Ointments and other topicals should be dispensed from larger containers into smaller containers for individual use. A clean lollipop stick is an ideal alternative to human fingers when it comes to dispensing a small amount of the topical from the container.
- Rodent, bird and insect control should be addressed.
- Feed should never be left uncovered and should be raised off the ground, ideally in a dedicated feed-room.
- Shared water sources are not advised. Hoses used to fill multiple water containers should not be submerged during the filling process.
- Stables, feed pots/ mangers and passageways should be clean, free of standing water, regularly and thoroughly scrubbed with an appropriate disinfectant, and allowed to dry.
- When using disinfectants, always follow the instructions on the label. Select a disinfectant that has documented effectiveness in the presence of 10% organic matter, works in the water hardness of the locale and is safe to use in the environment of horses and humans.
- Take care when using a pressure washer, those set at > 120psi can produce aerosols that have the potential to spread infectious agents suspended in the air.

Transport Biosecurity

- Vehicles should be cleaned and disinfected frequently and regularly, using approved disinfectants capable of killing bacteria and viruses. A list of DAFM approved disinfectants can be found here: <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/e1453-disinfectants/>
- Vehicles should be cleaned and disinfected before new horses load, and between loads.

- Horses should not be exposed to horses of lower health status (e.g. unwell or unvaccinated horses) during transport.
- Horses should only travel if they are considered fit to do so by a veterinary surgeon.
- Sick animals with confirmed or suspected infectious disease should not be transported except when they are travelling to obtain veterinary treatment. Under such circumstances mixed loads (sharing transport with other horses) is not appropriate.
- If horses become ill on or shortly after arrival at their destination, veterinary advice should be sought, and the sick horses and any in contacts isolated immediately. The transport operator should be informed at once and should inform other clients with arrivals in the same load.
- Registered horses moving from one Authorised Derogating Establishment to another on a DOCOM can only be transported via a Designated Transporter for Derogating Movement.

Disease Reporting (IHRB, 2023)

RESPE is a surveillance network for European equine diseases based on a network of Sentinel Veterinarians (VS). These VS, practitioners in the field and volunteers, provide daily monitoring of diseases in horses and report to the RESPE any **suspected illnesses** they encounter in the field. In practice, when a VS examines a horse suspected of having a disease monitored by the RESPE, he or she takes the samples corresponding to a clearly established protocol and sends information on this case/horse to the RESPE. The samples are sent to a RESPE partner medical analysis laboratory and if the disease is confirmed, an **anonymous alert** is widely distributed and published on the RESPE website. This allows the entire sector to be informed and to put in place **precautionary measures, if necessary**.

Further information can be found at: <https://respe.net/lassociation/>

Active disease surveillance using the RESPE network is required.

References

IHRB, 2023, "Code of Practice for Infectious Disease Control in Thoroughbred Racehorses in Training – Version 1"