

# Working together to build a **Picture of Health**



Ageing

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XLEquine veterinary practices believe that prevention is better than cure. Talk to your local XLEquine veterinary surgeon about preventative healthcare so together we can ensure your horse is a complete **Picture of Health**.



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IN AN ONLINE YOUR HORSE SURVEY VIA SURVEYMONKEY. PHOTO: SEBASTIAN KAULTZKI/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



**NEW HEALTH SERIES**

**PART 2**

# Dealing with disease

**MEET THE EXPERT**



**MARK TABACHNIK** is the Managing Partner at Wright and Morten Veterinary Practice, part of the XLEquine group. He's Vice-chairman of the XLEquine executive committee. Find out more at [www.wmvets.co.uk](http://www.wmvets.co.uk)

In the second of our series, where we explore key equine health issues, vet **Mark Tabachnik** reveals the **biosecurity measures** that are vital to keep our horses safe from disease - and we go undercover to find out if riders are putting them in place

**T**HE WORD BIOSECURITY might conjure up images of yellow tape and people in air-tight body suits but, in reality, simple measures to fight the spread of infectious disease are what make up this complicated sounding strategic approach.

"Good disease control can help prevent unnecessary disruption to equine businesses, such as yards and events, which may need to be cancelled in the face of a disease outbreak," explains our vet expert Mark Tabachnik. "It allows us to keep our horses protected while at home and with a simple set of guidelines to follow, it

allows us to travel safely to shows and mix with other horses."

**Are you aware of the risks?**

Taking your horse away from home to compete, attend clinics or simply hack somewhere new with friends introduces new risks to him and the other horses on your yard, but the measures you can take to minimise them, or avoid them, are simple.

So how many of us know what they are? In a survey we discovered the majority of Your Horse readers\* could list just two of the eight biosecurity measures found in XLEquine's *Plan, Prevent Protect* guide (turn the page to see what they are).

**Easy ways to keep him safe**

XLEquine's *Plan, Prevent, Protect* guide states there are eight measures we should be taking:

- 1 Ensure your horse's vaccinations are up to date, particularly for equine influenza ('flu) and tetanus.
- 2 Avoid sharing transport with horses from other yards.
- 3 Take your own buckets with you whenever you travel your horse - and your own water if possible.
- 4 Ensure your horse has his own tack, and don't lend it to anyone.
- 5 Avoid nose-to-nose contact between your horse and any new horses.
- 6 If you handle any other horses, wash your hands afterwards and/or between handling different horses.
- 7 Clean and disinfect your boots and outer clothing after each outing.
- 8 If your horse has been stabled away in close contact to other horses, keep him in isolation on return to your yard.



**SAFE**

Jane checks Lucky's vaccinations are up to date



**RISK**

'Flu and tetanus are an ever-present threat, so be sensible and make sure your horse is protected



**SAFE**

Like Jane, take your own water supply to competitions



**SAFE** Jane makes sure Lucky's gear is his, and only his!

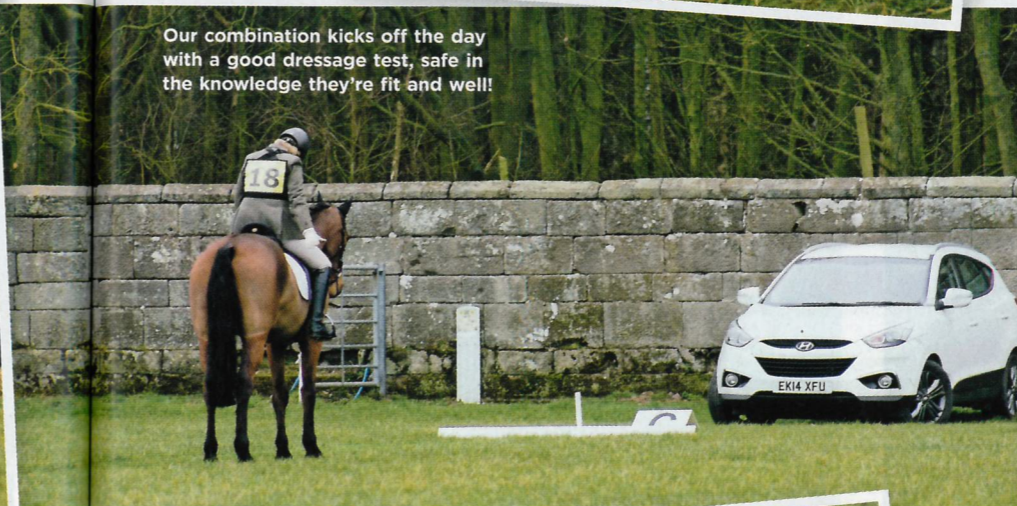


**RISK**

Nose-to-nose contact can lead to disease, so stay away!



Our combination kicks off the day with a good dressage test, safe in the knowledge they're fit and well!



Lucky enjoys the show jumping phase



With thanks to the team at Stafford Horse Trials for their help with this feature.

Most people who took our survey viewed keeping their horse's vaccinations up to date and taking their own water to a show as essential, but only one knew the importance of hand-washing after handling different horses. So, to see for ourselves the level of care UK riders take when they leave their yards, we went to one of the first of British Eventing's 2016 fixtures.

We spent the day following Your Horse reader Jane Byrne and her horse Kennystown Lucky (see right). Watching the measures Jane put in place, we were pleased to see what a fab and thorough job she did of protecting Lucky, but it was easy to see where any rider could slip up.

**How on it are you?**

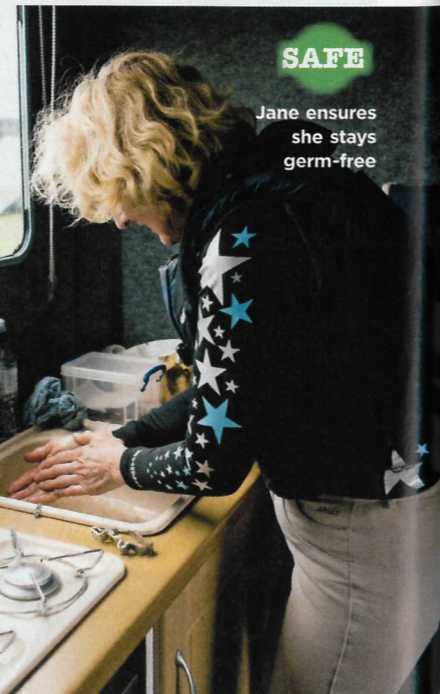
Be honest, when was the last time you gave a horse on your yard a quick pat without washing your hands afterwards? If you recently enjoyed a fun ride or show, could your horse have touched another? Have you shared transport with someone from another yard? And when was the last time you disinfected your riding boots after a competition? So, the next time you pack up your lorry, stop and think. Have you put into action all of the measures above?

Over the page, we look at the simple biosecurity measures you can take at home.



**RISK**

If you pat a friend's horse, you could spread disease from him to yours - so wash your hands



**SAFE**

Jane ensures she stays germ-free



Jane and Lucky make a splash on the cross-country course



**SAFE**

Once she's done, Jane removes her boots and gives them a good clean

## Stay on top of basic biosecurity at home

When it comes to biosecurity on the yard, again the principles are simple. They involve good yard hygiene and having a vaccination policy and isolation procedure for new arrivals.

"Isolation facilities mean that horses can be introduced onto new yards safely, with little risk of spreading contagious

diseases," says Mark. This doesn't mean you need a high-tech vet wing installed. An isolation plan can be as simple as the following three-step plan:

### 1. RE-LOCATE

New horses should be kept in isolation from any horses already resident on the

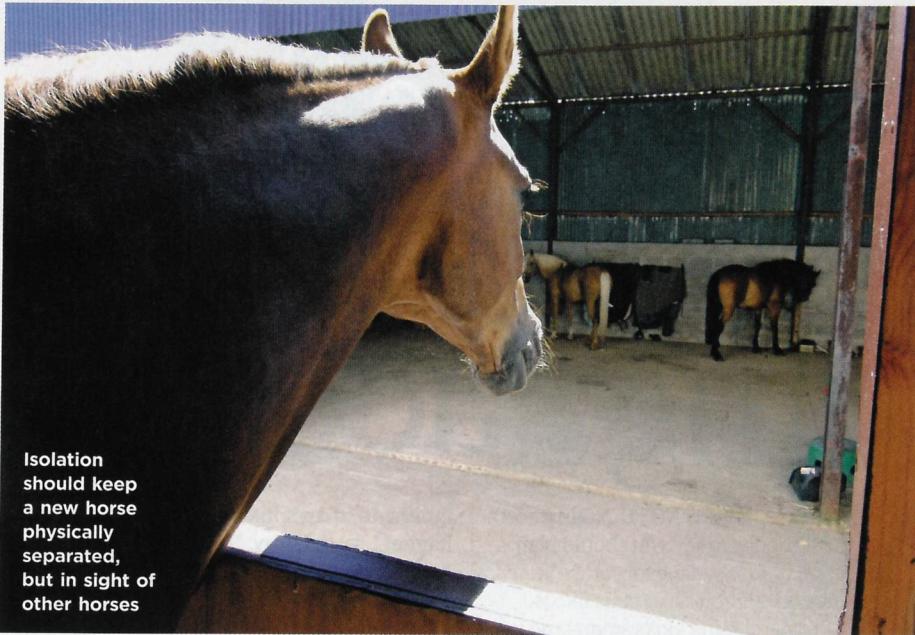
yard for a period of between 21 and 30 days. Ideally, the new horse should be kept in a stable block or field that's separate to the rest (a minimum of 10m away if possible).

### 2. HANDLE WITH CARE

During the isolation period, use separate equipment when you're grooming or feeding the isolated horse. To ensure these don't get mixed up with other horses' equipment, try marking them with a coloured tape. If you'll be handling other horses during the day, always deal with the isolated horse last, both morning and evening.

### 3. CLEANSE

Always wash your hands after handling any isolated horses. Other good hygiene practices include having separate tack and rugs for each horse.



Isolation should keep a new horse physically separated, but in sight of other horses

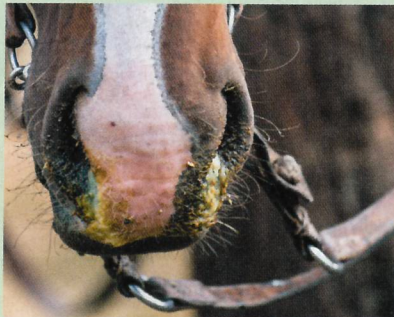
## WHAT ARE WE FIGHTING?

Good biosecurity is used to prevent the spread of different bacteria, parasites and viruses. Many contagious diseases,

such as flu and strangles can make horses very sick. Here are some of the key conditions to be aware of:

### ► Equine Influenza ('flu)

'Flu is highly contagious and can spread like wildfire around a yard of non-vaccinated horses. It causes high fevers, snotty noses and coughing.



### ► Ringworm

Highly contagious, ringworm is a fungal infection that can spread from horse to horse and even horse to human. While it's not hugely dangerous (and can even self-cure) the scabs and lesions it causes can be sore.



### ► Strangles

Even though strangles spreads more slowly through yards, it can easily be spread by horses touching noses or sharing buckets. Horses can even become chronically infected with the strangles bacterium and become a 'carrier'. In rare cases, horses can even die from abscesses forming internally, we call this 'bastard strangles'.



### Outbreak control

In the face of a disease outbreak, a good plan is to separate and isolate those horses affected with the illness - and those in contact with them - into a separate area from the non-affected horses. This should stop the problem spreading throughout the yard.

### NEXT MONTH

Our new series is run in support of XLEquine's Picture of Health Campaign. Next month we look into the latest advances in equine dentistry.

● Find out more at [www.xlequine.co.uk](http://www.xlequine.co.uk)