

Infection Control Policy WEAL - Wick Yard 23/24

Statement of Intent:

Wiltshire Equine Assisted Learning (W-EAL) have a responsibility to ensure the well-being and good health of both animals and learners at the centre. Prevention of infection and early identification and controlling and spread of infection is paramount. The following policy gives guidance of good practice which should be followed by all staff, learners and visitors.

What is infection?

Infectious diseases are disorders caused by organisms — such as bacteria, viruses, fungi or parasites. ... They're normally harmless or even helpful, but under certain conditions, some organisms may cause disease.

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 an animal's environment (e.g. soil, flies, other animals). These are known as infectious diseases and we are looking to prevent these by implementing the measures outlined in this policy.

Diseases that can be spread directly from one animal 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, influenza.

Animals don't always show signs of disease. They can be carriers of certain diseases (e.g. strangles) and therefore infectious to other animals, without showing symptoms.

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 is normal for the animals 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.

It is also important to understand that relatively minor diseases may affect the animal's well-being and ability to work so they may need rest and time off from any contact with learners.

Ensuring that staff and learner's do not contract infections from interactions with animals is highly important and good hygiene and biosecurity will help to prevent this occurring.

Protection of staff and learners:

All staff and learners should wash their hands and use disinfectant hand rubs provided prior to and after the handling of any animals

Staff or learners must wash their hands if they have any contact with animal droppings, blood, urine or other bodily fluids

Cuts on hands and arms should be covered with a plaster or dressing prior to animal contact

All learners should not handle or have direct contact with any animal that is suspected to have or has been diagnosed with an infectious illness

Staff caring for an animal with infectious illness should follow guidance from vets to ensure infection is controlled and to gain advice about zoonotic spread

Where staff or have contact outside the premises with an animal with infection (for example a horse with strangles) they should declare this to avoid the infection transferring between yards on hands, boots or clothing and veterinary guidance should be followed

All learners must be supervised at all times when in contact with animals or participating in animal care to ensure infection control procedures are followed

Signs will be displayed at the exits to fields to remind people to wash their hands and above the tap in the yard.

Hand sanitiser is kept on the yard and in teaching rooms and there are sinks for hand washing in the toilet and taps are available in the yard.

Where there is a severe infection diagnosed in an animal, which may pose a risk to learners or other animals through spread, sessions may be suspended until the all clear is given by a vet

Sickness, illness and Covid19:

Since the beginning of 2020 there has been an increased risk to staff and learners from coronavirus. Though there are no longer strict isolation guidelines please be aware that some of our learners have compromised immunity and must be shielded from health risk where possible. here is a risk assessment and policy in place for this specific risk. All staff and learners must adhere to this policy at all times.

If a child or young person has a temperature, sickness or diarrhoea, or show signs of virus they should try to stay at home for 48 hours to reduce spread of infection.

Protection of animals:

Animals to have a health care plan and receive at least annual visits from vets for health checks, immunisations, dental care.

Staff will follow the schedule in the health care plan for worming, vaccinations and these will be documented including reasons for non administration

All droppings to be removed from the animal's environment at least daily and twice daily if possible. They will be disposed of on the designated muck heap ONLY

Where an animal is stabled due to ill health all droppings and urine will be removed twice daily with a full muck out of the stable with skipping out in between. Clean bedding to be added frequently to ensure a fresh bed.

Stables will be disinfected using a disinfectant recommended by a vet to ensure eradication of the organism causing the infection

The muck heap will be kept tidy to ensure all droppings are contained within this area only. The muck heap will be removed regularly as required

Staff will be vigilant for any signs of infection in the animals and daily health checks will be carried out and documented on all animals

Any signs of ill health to be reported immediately to the Manager, a concern form should be completed, and veterinary visits will be arranged asap as necessary

If infectious disease is suspected the animal will be isolated in a stable or in a separate paddock until further veterinary advice can be obtained

If infectious disease is suspected learners will not be permitted to have contact with the animal
If infection is suspected increased vigilance will be needed to ensure all other animals remain in good health and health checks should be done at least twice daily

All stables to be emptied at the end of the winter and disinfected

When an animal is moved to another environment, for example to visit a care home or school, a record of this must be kept to help trace any source of infection should this occur post visit

Any new animals entering the premises, and before being added to existing herds or groups, should be given a period of quarantine and a vet health check prior to contact with other animals or entering animal communal spaces/accommodation. The vet should advise on the length of the period of quarantine. Quarantine may be in a separate paddock or stable or other separate accommodation (hutch, tank etc). This should be strictly enforced and no new horses or other animals will be brought onto the premises without a plan for quarantine, a passport showing up to date immunisations, and a vet check within 24 hours of arrival.

Medications given to animals with infections will be written up on the board in the feed room and kept in the locked cabinet. If they are receiving medication other than routine treatments a record should be kept of administration

Horse passports will be updated as required with information regarding medication and health

Where there is a need for additional biosecurity to particular paddocks addition of foot disinfectant baths may be used. Staff will supervise this and signs will be displayed to ensure use. Staff should be vigilant for signs of any rodent/insect infestations around the yard/fields and inside buildings. These should be reported straight away to the Managing Director/Manager and pest control arranged as needed. Pest control incidents should be recorded on the table within this policy.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

Individual animal care policies, Health and Safety policy, Risk assessment

Director: Hannah Lindsay Reviewed: 1.9.2023

For review 1.9.2025