

Defra Guidance Note: Horses and foot-and-mouth disease

Introduction

1. This guidance note is aimed at people owning, keeping, or working with horses kept for recreational purposes in England, during an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease. It explains what restrictions apply, and recommends the precautions you should take to minimise the risk of spreading disease.
2. Restrictions and advice change during an outbreak, so if you are in any doubt, please check the Defra website (www.defra.gov.uk) or the Defra helpline (08459 33 55 77) for the latest position.

Background

3. Horses are not susceptible to infection by foot-and-mouth disease, and they cannot carry the virus in the same way as susceptible animals, such as sheep and cattle. However, in common with other non-susceptible animals (such as dogs and cats), people and inanimate objects (such as cars), they can be involved in physically spreading infection.
4. Material from an infected animal (dung, hair *etc.*) can be carried on hooves, bodies and tack of horses and by the rider. It could be carried from areas containing infected animals to previously 'clean' areas.
5. The risk of horses carrying the virus is increased because horses are often kept on the same premises as susceptible animals¹, transported in vehicles used for moving susceptible animals, have contact with susceptible animals on neighbouring farms, or are handled by persons who also have contact with susceptible animals. There are therefore significantly tighter controls on the keeping of horses in a Protection Zone, than apply, say, to persons keeping dogs at home.
6. But the risk also varies greatly according to the particular circumstances: so, for example, a horse which is always kept on premises with no contact with susceptible livestock, and which is handled by persons who do not have contact with susceptible animals, will not pose a significantly greater risk as a medium for transmission than, say, a car or bicycle. Whereas a horse kept on a livestock farm will pose a much greater risk, and much more stringent precautions must be taken.

Legal requirements

7. In this guidance note, we have drawn special attention to requirements which you **must** follow, and advice which you are **asked** to follow. Where this guidance note says that you **must** or **must not** do something, it means that this is a **require-**

¹ 'Susceptible animal' means a cow, bull, sheep, goat, deer, camel, llama, alpaca, and any other ruminant, any swine (pig), elephant or rodent (other than a pet rodent).

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ment under the Foot-and-Mouth Disease (England) Order 2006². If you do not observe these requirements, you may commit an offence, and the local authority may take enforcement action against you. In each case, a footnote shows which provision of the Order creates the offence.

8. Where advice is given which is **not** a requirement, this is based on accepted good practice and is designed to assist horse owners to play their part in preventing the disease from spreading.

9. Advice to persons keeping, riding or looking after horses varies depends on where the horse is kept:

- **Protection Zones** are declared in the vicinity (a radius of at least three kilometres) of an infected premises — usually, a farm where diseased livestock have been found. Special guidance in relation to horses kept in a Protection Zone is contained further below.
- **Surveillance Zones** are declared in the vicinity (a radius of at least ten kilometres, but outside the Protection Zone) of an infected premises.
- Outside of any Protection Zones and Surveillance Zone, some activities are also prohibited in a **Restricted Zone**. During an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, the whole of Great Britain is likely to be declared a Restricted Zone. However, this guidance note only gives advice about the position in England.

10. In some cases, it may be possible to do something which is normally prohibited, under licence from an inspector or veterinary inspector. We have marked the text with an “(L)” where this is the case — but this does not mean that you are entitled to obtain a licence: it will depend on the circumstances. Specific licences may be issued in exceptional circumstances (e.g. to alleviate extreme welfare problems). Please contact the local Animal Health Divisional Office if you require further information on specific licences (see the Defra website at: www.defra.gov.uk/animalhealth/about-us/contact-us/animal-health-offices.htm for a list of offices, or contact the Defra helpline: 08459 33 55 77). Some licences are issued for general purposes: you can see a list of general licences on the Defra website, at:

www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/fmd/movements/index.htm.

General requirements

11. This section is aimed at people with horses kept outside a Protection or Surveillance Zone. There are few restrictions affecting people with horses outside these zones. However, the following do apply:

- You **must not** organise or take part in hunting a drag or other trail (L)³.
- You **must not** ride into a Protection Zone, even on a road (L)⁴.

² You can refer to a copy of the Order (SI 2006/182) on the internet, at: www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2006/20060182.htm, or at some reference libraries.

³ Paragraph 6(2)(a) of Schedule 7.

⁴ Paragraph 12 of Schedule 5 (Part 2).

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- You **must not** transport your horse into a Protection Zone, even to see a vet (L)⁵.
- You may transport your horse through a Protection Zone, but you **must do** so only without breaking your journey⁶.

12. If you need to take your horse to see a vet whose premises is located in a Protection Zone, please contact your vet. Your vet will be able to discuss alternative arrangements with you.

General advice

13. Veterinary advice is that the risk of transmission of disease arising from horse riders using rights of way and open land outside Protection Zones is negligible, and does not justify the closure of paths. However, path users, whether on foot, horseback or on cycle, should take sensible precautions to minimise any residual risk, and to maintain confidence. These precautions should also be taken when using unfenced roads across grazing land (e.g. common land):

- Avoid straying from paths onto adjoining land.
- Avoid riding among or through livestock — ride around if possible.
- Never touch or handle livestock.
- Avoid taking dogs where there may be livestock (cattle, in particular, are curious, and may approach dogs).
- Try to avoid riding through manure and slurry.
- Take any waste, including food, home (however, horse droppings cannot harbour foot-and-mouth disease, and do not pose a risk).
- Try to use any disinfectant pads which the land manager provides.

Advice in relation to horses kept in a Surveillance Zone

14. This section is aimed at people with horses kept inside a Surveillance Zone (but not within a Protection Zone). Again, there are few specific requirements affecting these people or their horses, but the following do apply:

- You **must not** organise or take part in hunting a drag or other trail (L)⁷.
- If you take a dog with you, you **must** keep it under close control⁸.
- You **must not** transport manure from premises where susceptible animals are kept (L)⁹.
- You **must not** ride into a Protection Zone, even on a road (L)¹⁰.

⁵ Paragraph 12 of Schedule 5 (Part 2).

⁶ Paragraph 12(2)(d) of Schedule 5 (Part 2).

⁷ Paragraph 27(2)(a) of Schedule 5 (Part 3).

⁸ Paragraph 3(1) of Schedule 5 (Part 1).

⁹ Paragraph 33(2) of Schedule 5 (Part 3).

¹⁰ Paragraph 12 of Schedule 5 (Part 2).

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- You **must not** transport your horse into a Protection Zone, even to see a vet (L)¹¹.
- You may transport your horse through a Protection Zone, but you **must do** so only without breaking your journey¹².

15. The good practice guidance at paragraph 13 above on riding on paths is particularly important in a Surveillance Zone. Please try to follow it.

16. If you need to take your horse to see a vet whose premises is located in a Protection Zone, please contact your vet. Your vet will be able to discuss alternative arrangements with you.

Advice in relation to horses kept in a Protection Zone

17. This section is aimed at people with horses kept in a Protection Zone. The need to take precautionary measures is greater if you keep your horse on the same premises as susceptible animals (such as cattle and sheep). So some of the advice and requirements below apply only in relation to horses kept on the same premises as susceptible animals. This guidance does not cover all the rules which apply in a Protection Zone, only those which are likely to be relevant to those keeping horses in a Protection Zone (further details of the rules applying within a Protection Zone can be obtained from the Defra website, www.defra.gov.uk).

18. The following general rules apply:

- You **must not** organise or take part in hunting a drag or other trail, or point-to-point meetings¹³.
- You **must not** hold any gathering of animals (even horses)¹⁴.
- If you have a dog with you, you **must** keep it under close control¹⁵.

Horses kept on premises without susceptible animals

19. If you **do not** keep your horse on the same premises as susceptible animals:

- You may ride on roads (unless they are closed) — there is no greater likelihood of you or your horse spreading infection by riding on the road, than a motorist, cyclist or pedestrian.
- You **must not** ride on any public rights of way or other paths which are closed (L)¹⁶. Where rights of way or paths remain open, try to avoid riding on land used for grazing livestock since the beginning of July.
- If you are riding out (on roads, or open paths), leave your dog behind.

¹¹ Paragraph 12 of Schedule 5 (Part 2).

¹² Paragraph 12(2)(d) of Schedule 5 (Part 2).

¹³ Paragraph 15(1) of Schedule 5 (Part 2).

¹⁴ Paragraph 14 of Schedule 5 (Part 2).

¹⁵ Paragraph 3(1) of Schedule 5 (Part 1).

¹⁶ Article 36(2) (article 36(1) enables an inspector, with the consent of the Secretary of State, to prohibit access to any land in a Protection Zone, by notice).

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- You **must not** ride or take your horse out of the Protection Zone (L)¹⁷, even to see a vet.

20. If roads or paths through grazing land remain open in a Protection Zone, and if you cannot avoid riding on them, then the good practice guidance at paragraph 13 above on riding on paths is very important. Please try to follow it.

Horses kept on the same premises as susceptible animals

21. If you **do** keep your horse on the same premises as susceptible animals:

- You **must not** allow your horse to leave the premises (L)¹⁸, even to see a vet.
- You **must not** bring any horse onto the premises from elsewhere (L)¹⁹.
- You **must not** move a horsebox from the premises (L)²⁰.
- You **must not** arrange for fodder to be brought on to the premises (L)²¹, but a general licence has been given for this purpose under certain conditions — see www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/fmd/movements/index.htm.
- You **must not** transport manure from the premises (L)²².
- You **must not** spread manure on the premises or elsewhere (L)²³.

22. In addition, before and after riding you should:

- Avoid contact with livestock.
- Keep horses away from livestock.
- Comply with the farm's own disease control precautions.
- Disinfect your footwear.
- Disinfect the outside of any item that may have been in contact with other articles in general use on a farm.
- Clean and disinfect the horse's feet.
- Either keep a set of dedicated riding clothes on the farm premises or arrive in clean clothes on every occasion.
- Where possible leave vehicles outside farms or close to the farm boundary and away from livestock.

23. If you need to take your horse to see a vet, please contact your vet. Your vet will be able to discuss alternative arrangements with you (for example, your vet may be able to treat your horse on the premises, or it may be possible to obtain a licence to enable your horse to be moved).

¹⁷ Paragraph 12(1) of Schedule 5 (Part 2).

¹⁸ Paragraph 11(1) of Schedule 5 (Part 2).

¹⁹ Paragraph 11(1) of Schedule 5 (Part 2).

²⁰ Paragraph 13 of Schedule 5 (Part 2).

²¹ Paragraph 17 of Schedule 5 (Part 2).

²² Paragraph 20(2) of Schedule 5 (Part 3).

²³ Paragraph 20(9) of Schedule 5 (Part 3).

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Horses on infected premises

24. The restrictions applying to horses kept on the same premises as susceptible animals also apply to those kept on farms where outbreaks have been confirmed. There is, however, no question of these horses being slaughtered, because they are not affected by foot-and-mouth disease.

25. You **must not** allow your horse to leave an infected farm (L), even to see a vet, until the restrictions on that farm are removed²⁴.

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²⁴ Paragraph 11 of Schedule 1.