Challenges of Biosecurity and Regulatory Disease Control at Thoroughbred Racetracks

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Why is biosecurity important?
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Challenge: Venue design

• Barn structures often wooden, dirt alleyways – not amendable to thorough cleaning and disinfection
• May be multiple entry points to the backside of the track with little security oversight
Challenge: Horse population

- Constantly changing population of horses
  - Some housed onsite for the racing season, others moving multiple times a week
  - Transport stress
  - No inspection for clinical signs of disease before offloading
  - Horse trailers as fomites
Challenge: Equine caretakers

- Common caretakers for multiple groups of horses, e.g., exercise riders and pony people
- Caretakers’ clothing, shoes, and/or hands frequently become soiled with saliva, respiratory secretions, blood, urine, and manure from multiple horses throughout day
- Opportunities for handwashing scarce on the backside
Challenge: Life on the backside

- Other animals – domestic and wild, rodents, insects
Challenge: Life on the backside

• Traversing the expanse of the backside → vehicular fomites
Mitigating risks of pathogen transmission

- Consider any horse arriving to the track as a potential disease risk
- Single entry point for arriving horses, place in new arrivals holding barn
- Horses evaluated upon arrival by track regulatory veterinarian to confirm ID, CVI, vaccines and absence of clinical signs of illness
- Enforceable and enforced rules for refusing entry of unhealthy horses
- Trailers do not move beyond the new arrivals holding barn
Mitigating risks of pathogen transmission

• THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF BIOSECURITY IS EARLY RECOGNITION OF A SICK ANIMAL.
  • Isolate sick patient
  • Quarantine contacts
  • Stop movement of animals and associated people, equipment, feed, manure, etc.
• Recommended that all horses on premises should have rectal temperature taken at least once daily; temp chart visible in barn
Mitigating risks of pathogen transmission

- Standard isolation procedures for sick horses
  - PPE, separate feed storage and waste disposal, foot baths
- Dedicated caretaker
- Contacts should only be allowed to train on track at the end of the day
- Routinely, no sharing of equipment between horses, or do not share if it cannot be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected
Mitigating risks of pathogen transmission

- Improve access to handwashing facilities
  - Sinks with soap, waterless hand sanitizers
- Freshly laundered and dried clothing at start of each day
- No livestock or pets allowed on premises
- Integrated pest management
Mitigating risks of pathogen transmission

- Single entry point with sign-in for delivery and maintenance personnel, etc.
- Plastic booties
- Escort to destination
Training employees

- All new employees are trained in track’s biosecurity and horse health practices
  - Assign a particularly interested and adept employee to be the biosecurity officer
    - Offer opportunities for additional training, mentorship
  - Create an internal accreditation program
Implementation

• Key messages
  • “All people are responsible for horse health at this track.”
  • “Delaware Park (or other track) is a ‘clean’ track.”

• Meetings, pamphlets, signage, stickers, media releases
References


Contact

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