



Preventing the Spread of COVID-19: Recommendations for the Ambulatory Practitioner

*Encourage your boarding barns to read and enforce AAEP's document
["Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in Equestrian Facilities"](#)*

Before Arriving on The Farm

Telemedicine:

- Use telemedicine if at all possible to avoid less critical ambulatory calls.
- Obtain the horse's history and detail a workup plan over the phone prior to arriving on the farm. If laboratory testing may be necessary, contact the laboratory to determine services available.

Timing:

- Schedule visits to large boarding barns at a time when fewer people are present.
- Delay non-essential appointments such as dental procedures.

Owner/Barn Communication:

- Ask the farm manager or caregiver what biosecurity measures are currently in place to prevent animal and/or human exposure to disease pathogens.
- Inform owners/managers of your biosecurity plan and workflow plans prior to arrival to limit interaction on the property.
- Ask if any persons on the farm have been exposed to a person with symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, shortness of breath, or fever) or if anyone is showing symptoms of COVID-19. If so, use personal protective equipment (PPE) to minimize the risk of spread in addition to extensive disinfection. Do not allow any of these people to be present for the exam. Refer to [CDC information about COVID-19 symptoms](#) for additional guidance.

- Notify owner of the limitation of one person only at the examination. Additional individuals can be on speakerphone or on Facetime.
- Maintain at least a 6-foot distance and have the handler stand on the opposite side of the horse from the veterinarian (if possible).

While on the Farm

Clothes:

- Consider wearing coveralls over street clothes so that coveralls can be removed before leaving the premises and placed in a bag for laundering.

Tote:

- Designate one tote to take limited materials out of the truck to the barn.
- Disinfect all unused supplies before replacing them into the truck. Disinfect the tote as well or any other supplies or equipment that may have been needed (x-ray, ultrasound, etc.).
- Wipe down laboratory sample tubes and containers with disinfectant and place into plastic bags for submission to in-house or referral labs. The exterior of the bags should be sprayed with disinfectant before submission to lab.
- Ensure 2 sets of PPE (coveralls, gloves, goggles and masks (if possible)) are prepared and stored in plastic containers/ bags in truck.

Garbage Container:

- Use plastic bags to line garbage containers to assist in disposal after each farm visit. Use fresh garbage bags for each farm call.
- At the end of the day, gather all garbage bags and place in large sealed bag. Spray exterior with disinfectant and place in trash. Medical waste should be handled the same.
- Sharps should be placed in sharps containers, and the outside disinfected.

Prescribing Medications:

- Following the application of a prescription label, consider using a layer of packing tape to cover the label so that the vial/container may be disinfected prior to handing to the client.

Handling Fractious Horses:

- When a technician is not available to handle a fractious animal, consider the use of oral or IM sedation to proceed IV sedation. Also, consider the use of a lidocaine cream or ointment prior to injections to decrease the horse's topical sensation and thereby hopefully facilitate solo treatment. (Racing or competition horse withdrawals should be considered.)

Halters, Lead Ropes, Lunge Lines, and Stud chains:

- To avoid contamination, use your own halter/lead rope/chain/lunge line .
- Equipment and supplies should be cleaned and disinfected after each farm.
- **Wash hands or use hand sanitizer frequently while in barn.**

After Visiting the Farm (prior to proceeding to the next farm)

Disinfection of your vehicle and supplies:

- The cell phone, steering wheel, gas cap, knobs, gear shifter, keys, seat, vet box handles, tote, stethoscope, thermometer, and door handles are frequently contacted surfaces, thus require frequent disinfection with approved disinfectants.
- Although there is no evidence that horses can contract or become ill from COVID-19, practice good hygiene by washing your hands with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds or using a >60% alcohol hand sanitizer after touching a horse, communal areas, or communal equipment to prevent environmental spread of the virus. Hand sanitizer is not as effective as soap and water, so only use when there is no soap and water available and hands are not visibly soiled.

New client forms and payments:

- Restrict the use of paper and pens.
- Utilize electronic forms, documentation and payment processing.
- **Disinfect credit cards and wash hands after use.**
- Wash your hands well after touching cash payments.

Opening shipments:

- Because of the possible spread of COVID-19 on cardboard in addition to non-porous surfaces, spray or wipe boxes with disinfectant prior to opening.

Sanitation Breaks:

- Plan to stop at a less occupied barn or at your home to use the restroom instead of a convenience store.
- Pack food/drinks for each trip.

Gas Stations:

- Disinfect the gas pump prior to using or hands after using.
- **Sanitize credit card after use.**

Have a Backup Plan:

- Make a back-up plan with regional veterinarians to provide veterinary care to your clients if you are quarantined/ill.

Close Your Office to Outside Traffic:

- Do not allow access to a communal office space unless the persons are essential.
- Consider door drop off for medication or in an outdoor space.

After Last Call:

- Remove street clothes and footwear and shower immediately upon arrival to home/ office.
- Wash street clothes daily.

Other helpful sites:

- [CDC COVID-19 disinfection guidelines](#)
- [Approved disinfectants for tougher surfaces](#) (not to be used on leather)
- [Equine Disease Communication Center Equine Coronavirus fact sheet](#)

