

Cleaning and disinfecting stables

It is essential that very high standards of hygiene are implemented in FEI stables. In accordance with the FEI Veterinary Regulations, it is necessary that stables are cleaned and disinfected before the arrival of horses to ensure they are free from contamination and disease vectors. Horse transporters and stables must also be cleaned and disinfected before they are used between different horses.

Cleaning and disinfection protocol

Cleaning and disinfecting stables is a multi-step process.

1. Remove all bedding and stable fittings such as feed and water buckets, haynets and rubber matting
2. Sweep the walls and floor of the stable to remove as much organic matter as possible
3. Wet all surfaces of the stable using a hose. It may be necessary to leave the stables for 30min before continuing to soften caked-on organic matter to allow for easier cleaning.
4. Clean the stables walls and floor with a detergent to emulsify organic matter and make it easier to remove. It may be necessary to manually scrub the walls and floor to loosen organic matter. Alternatively, a low pressure power washer can be used however it must be used below 120psi to prevent the production of aerosols that spread infectious agents into the air.
5. Rinse the walls from the top downwards, starting furthest away from the drain or door. It is necessary to pay close attention to corners and crevices and to rise the floor well.
6. Leave the stable to dry.
7. Dilute a phenolic disinfectant according to the manufacturer's instructions and apply it to the walls and floor. This can be carried out using a hand held sprayer or garden sprayer. Always ensure that suitable protective clothing is used when handling disinfectants.
8. Do not rinse the stable with water after applying the disinfectant. The stable should be left to dry as the contact time between the disinfectant and surfaces allow it to work effectively.
9. Ensure the stable is dry before filling it with clean bedding
10. Remember to clean and disinfect and stable fittings before replacing them e.g. rubber flooring, feed and water buckets.

Selecting a disinfectant

There are a number of disinfectants available for use however it is important that the most appropriate and effective disinfectant is used with respect to the horse's environment.

The ideal disinfectant must be biodegradable, safe for animals and humans, ensure it is suitable for farm use, effective in the presence of organic matter and effective with respect to the local water hardness and ambient temperature.

Phenolic disinfectants are the most preferred for use in the equine environment. Iodophores are not often used in the equine environment and more suitable for the washing of hands and equipment. Quaternary ammonium compounds, hypochlorites (e.g. bleach), chlorhexidine and pine oil are not recommended since they are ineffective in the presence of organic matter. Formaldehyde disinfectants are highly toxic and not recommended for use in the equine environment.

Stable construction and effective cleaning and disinfection

The materials from which stables are constructed can impact the ability to clean and disinfect them effectively.

Wooden stables have porous, rough surfaces which make cleaning and disinfection very difficult. Modifications can be carried out such as filling holes and knots in the wood with plastic wood products or caulking, and applying marine varnish. This results in a smooth, waterproof surface that is easy to clean and disinfect.

Concrete blocks also have porous, rough surfaces which can trap organic matter. Applying enamel or heavy duty outdoor paint results in surfaces that can be easily cleaned and disinfected.

Asphalt floors can be washed and disinfected easily. It is ideal to incorporate a drain into the floor which should be sloped towards the drain. Sand, dirt or compacted clay floors cannot be adequately cleaned.

With respect to stable design, it is advisable to build stables with as few corners and cracks as possible to enable effective cleaning and disinfection.

References:

Dwyer, R.M., (1995) Disinfecting equine facilities, *Rev Sci Off, Int Epiz.*, 14 (2) 403-418

BHA General Instructions 7.2 6 October 2014

NTF Code of Practice for Infectious Diseases of Racehorses in Training (2018)