

Essential Requirements for Traveling with Horses Intrastate, Interstate, and Internationally

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Horse owners who travel with their equines, whether intrastate, interstate, or internationally, must adhere to specific regulatory and health requirements to ensure the safety and well-being of their horses, as well as to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Understanding these requirements is critical to avoiding disruptions in travel plans and ensuring compliance with state and federal regulations. Discussed here are key considerations for horse owners, focusing on Certificates of Veterinary Inspection (CVIs), Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) testing, brand inspections, and the importance of timely veterinary care. Additionally, it highlights the risks posed by infectious diseases such as Strangles and Vesicular Stomatitis, which can lead to quarantine and other complications.

Certificates of Veterinary Inspection (CVIs)

A Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI), commonly referred to as a health certificate, is a legal document required for the movement of horses across state lines and, in some cases, within states. The CVI certifies that an accredited veterinarian has examined the horse and found it to be free of infectious or contagious diseases. The CVI must be issued within a specific timeframe prior to travel, typically 30 days, though this can vary by state. Horse owners should consult their state's Department of Agriculture or equivalent regulatory body to confirm the exact requirements. It is crucial to schedule the veterinary examination close enough to the travel date to ensure the CVI remains valid for the duration of the trip. Developing a strong relationship with a veterinarian who is familiar with your horse's health history is essential, as they will be able to provide accurate and timely documentation.

Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) Testing

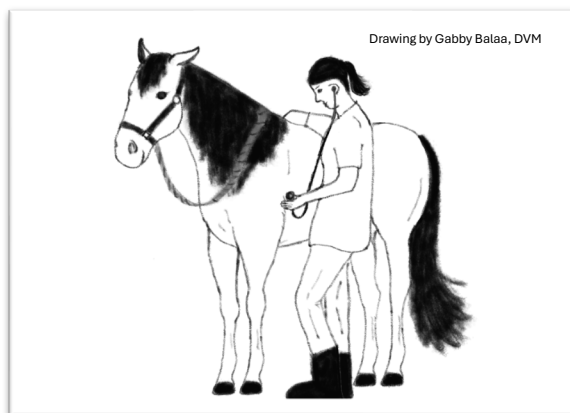
One of the most critical components of interstate and intrastate travel is the requirement for a negative Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) test, commonly known as a Coggins test. EIA is a viral disease that can be transmitted through insect vectors or contaminated equipment and has no cure or vaccine. A negative Coggins test is mandatory for all horses crossing state lines and is often required for intrastate travel, especially when attending shows, competitions, or boarding facilities. The test must be conducted by an accredited veterinarian, and the results are typically valid for 6 to 12 months, depending on the state.

Horse owners should ensure their horse's Coggins test is up-to-date and carry a copy of the negative test results during travel.

Brand Inspections and Their Connection to CVIs

In addition to health certifications, some states require brand inspections for horses traveling across state lines or even within the state. A brand inspection is an official examination of the horse's identifying marks, such as brands, tattoos, or microchips, to verify ownership and prevent theft. States like Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana have strict brand inspection laws, and failure to comply can result in fines or delays. Importantly, a brand inspection is often tied to the issuance of a CVI. For example, in some states, a horse cannot receive a CVI without a valid brand inspection certificate. Horse owners should check the brand inspection requirements of both their home state and the destination state well in advance of travel. Brand inspections are typically conducted by state-appointed brand inspectors, and the process may require scheduling an appointment, so planning ahead is essential.

Infectious Diseases and Quarantine Risks



Traveling with horses increases the risk of exposure to infectious diseases, which can have severe consequences for both the individual horse and the broader equine population. Two notable diseases that can result in quarantine or travel restrictions are Strangles (caused by *Streptococcus equi* ssp *equi*) and Vesicular Stomatitis (VS). Strangles is a highly contagious bacterial infection that causes fever, nasal discharge, and abscesses

in the lymph nodes. Vesicular Stomatitis is a viral disease that causes blister-like lesions on the mouth, tongue, and hooves. Both diseases are reportable, meaning that if a horse is diagnosed while traveling, it may be quarantined in the affected state until it is no longer contagious. This can result in significant delays and additional costs for the owner. To minimize the risk of exposure, horse owners should practice good biosecurity measures, such as avoiding shared water sources and equipment, and isolating new or returning horses for at least 14 days. Horse owners can visit the Equine Disease Communication Center website to monitor real time alerts and information posted to help prevent and mitigate equine infectious disease spread.

International Travel Considerations

International travel with horses involves additional layers of complexity, including stricter health requirements, extended quarantine periods, and adherence to the importing country's regulations. In addition to a CVI and negative Coggins test, horses may need to undergo testing for diseases such as Equine Piroplasmiasis, Dourine, and Glanders, depending on the destination country. Vaccination requirements, such as those for Equine Influenza and Equine Herpesvirus, may also apply. Horse owners should work closely with their veterinarian and a professional equine transport company to ensure all documentation and health protocols are met well in advance of travel.

Conclusion

Traveling with horses requires careful planning and adherence to state, federal, and international regulations. A valid CVI, negative Coggins test, and, in some cases, a brand inspection are foundational requirements for intrastate and interstate travel, while international travel demands even more rigorous preparation. Horse owners should prioritize developing a strong relationship with their veterinarian to ensure timely and accurate health certifications. Additionally, understanding the risks posed by infectious diseases like Strangles and Vesicular Stomatitis is essential to avoid quarantine and other travel disruptions. By staying informed and proactive, horse owners can ensure a smooth and safe travel experience for their equine companions.