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## TRAILER TIPS

### BIOSECURITY



brought to you by **Twister Trailer**  
 interview by **Robyn Volkening**

Unfortunately, those of us in the equine world have always had to deal with various contagious diseases, such as this summer's Vesicular Stomatitis outbreak in Colorado. When you compete on your horses and haul to new locations on a frequent basis, biosecurity and keeping your animals as safe as possible from sickness is of utmost importance. This month, we interview Dr. Paul Morley, Colorado State University veterinarian and director of infection control for the university's James L. Voss Veterinary Teaching Hospital on best practices for biosecurity.

**TWISTER TRAILER:** Dr. Morley, thanks for taking time to talk with me. I think what most people want to know is what can we do to help keep our horses safe from viruses and contagious disease?

**DR MORLEY:** A large factor in this VSV outbreak, as well as some others, is fly control. It is very important to keep flies to a minimum, which includes keeping manure away from horses, providing shelter especially mid-day to dusk when flies are biting, providing fly masks and sheets, and spraying horses daily with animal fly spray including wiping their face and ears, and spraying barns. We also recommend keeping vehicle windows up, since flies being transported is an easy way to spread these diseases.

Since disease is also spread by direct contact, other steps include not allowing horses to touch new horses, not tying horses where other horses have been tied, not sharing tack or equipment including water buckets, feeders, and hay bags, not handling other horses or letting others touch your horse, and keeping new horses or horses returning from a rodeo separated from those that stayed home for at least a week after returning from an event to monitor for any sickness. Also disinfecting trailers before and after use, tie rails, stalls, etc. It is also smart to wash your hands often and thoroughly.

**TWISTER:** Can we disinfect trailers with a pressure washer?

**DR MORELY:** No! A pressure washer just sprays the contaminants over a larger area. First remove any manure, bedding, hay, feed bags, trailer ties, etc. and then you need to use soap, like a laundry detergent, and a stiff brush to hand scrub the entire area to remove dirt, grease, and organic material. Then you must rinse off the soap, because soap can interfere with disinfectants. Let the surface dry to not dilute disinfectant.

left: Dr. Paul Morley  
 - Courtesy of Dr. Morley

**TWISTER:** So which disinfectant do we use?

**DR MORELY:** There are many different contaminants, some are very resistant, and some, such as VSV, herpes virus, influenza, salmonella, etc. are not environmentally stable and more easily deactivated. Different surfaces and different temperatures will lead to your disinfectant choice. Bleach is easily inactivated by any organic matter (such as manure or dirt) and becomes ineffective if the surface is not extremely clean. Do not use any kind of antiseptic solution that you would use on a wound, such as Chlorhexidine or iodine products, on surfaces.

There are quaternary disinfectants (ammonium in ingredients), which are fairly effective in the presence of organic matter, and phenolic disinfectants (phenol in ingredients). They work differently. Some of these are very corrosive on metal and should be used with caution on trailers. Phenols are also toxic to cats and pigs. Virkon is a commercially available disinfectant that can be useful. Your local farm store should have appropriate disinfectants. Follow the instructions on the container as these are major chemicals. Some disinfectants need to have surface contact for 20-30 minutes before rinsing to be effective.

**TWISTER:** Some people say that horses get a stronger immune system if we aren't constantly disinfecting everything. Your thoughts on this theory?

**DR MORLEY:** As someone whose job it is to keep sick animals from contracting any other diseases while in our clinic, I strongly disagree with this statement. It is very important to regularly and thoroughly clean and disinfect not only your barn and trailer, but any stalls where you are at an event.

**TWISTER:** Thank you for your help on this scary subject. Where do we get more information?

**DR MORLEY:** We have a video on traveling with your horse here: <http://youtu.be/59orM51jcb0>. Or search YouTube for CSU "Protect Your Show Horse from Infectious Disease." visit <http://csu-cvmb.colostate.edu/yth/Pages/vesicular-stomatitis-presentation.aspx>.