



Farriers: Working in a COVID-19 pandemic



Farriers work closely with both people and horses in their day-to-day activities. At present, there is no evidence that horses, other livestock or companion animals can become sick with COVID-19 or transmit the virus to people. However, there are some precautions that should be taken.

- **Stay home if you feel sick** . The SARS-COV-2 virus which is the cause of COVID-19 is highly contagious . It is transmitted through respiratory droplets and can last on uncleaned surfaces for up to 3 days in some circumstances. If you or someone in your household tests positive for COVID-19, follow your health provider's instructions for self-isolation .

If you are concerned that you may have been exposed to, or are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, please contact Telehealth at (1-866-797-0000), your primary care provider, or your local public health unit. Please let them know that you have had contact with horses or other animals. For more information go to: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus/public-resources>

- **Discuss your visit with your client**. Is the visit essential? If yes, then work on the horse tied or on cross-ties to eliminate the need for a handler when possible and with owner consent. If a handler is required, only the horse owner or designated person should be present while you work. People can be infected with COVID-19 without showing signs and can shed large amounts of virus. If the owner or barn manager has been sick or has been in contact with someone who has been sick, then consider postponing the appointment and consult your healthcare provider for guidance.
- **Be mindful of biosecurity**. Although there is no evidence that horses can transmit the virus to people, there is a small possibility that they can act as a fomite. This means if an infected person coughs, sneezes, kisses or otherwise touches the horse, that the virus could be transmitted to you by touching the contaminated area. The most likely area would be around the horse's head. This also means that objects in the barn that are commonly handled could also become contaminated. Barn cats and dogs may also act as fomites.

Suggestions for heightened biosecurity include:

- **Work in a well ventilated area.**
- **Wear gloves** prior to entering and upon leaving the barn. Dispose of these gloves upon leaving the barn and use hand sanitizer before entering your truck. If you don't have gloves (or can't obtain any) please wash your hands for 20 seconds before and right after leaving the barn.
- **Clean your boots** before and after entering the barn. Boots should be clear of manure prior to disinfecting. Overboots can be worn but should be cleaned and disinfected prior to getting into the truck.
- **Change your shirt or wipe your jacket** between barns if horses' muzzles/noses come in contact with you while working.
- **Clean and disinfect your tools**. Commonly used cleaners and disinfectants are effective against COVID-19. When cleaning and disinfecting tools, rinse them before drying to prevent corrosion. Don't forget the bottom/wheels of your shoeing box.
- **Keep your dog in your truck** or consider leaving them at home. Dogs could also act as fomites and may be touched by several people at the barn.

For recommendations on cleaning and disinfecting go here: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/cleaning-disinfection.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcommunity%2Fhome%2Fcleaning-disinfection.html