

## Horse Sense and Premise ID

The Ag-Info Centre has received numerous calls over the past week concerning confusion over premise identification for horse owners. A recent article contained a number of misleading statements concerning two new provincial acts that came into effect on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009. The two acts that came into effect on January 1<sup>st</sup> are the Livestock Identification and Commerce Act and the Animal Health Act.

It's time to put out this grass fire. First of all, relax. For horse owners the situation is not as critical as the article would lead you to believe. The Livestock Identification and Commerce Act was referenced in the article, however this act does not deal with Premise Identification. The Livestock Identification and Commerce Act (LICA) is a consolidation of the Brand Act, the Livestock Identification and Brand Inspection Act and the Livestock and Livestock Products Act. For horse owners, LICA actually provides one main advantage over the previous acts. With the new act, horse owners no longer require a manifest unless they are transporting their horses for the purpose of sale or slaughter, to an inspection site ( basically to determine proof of ownership if required by an inspector ), or out of the province. So if you load your horse in the trailer and haul him to the neighbour's branding or a local ranch roping you no longer have to fill out a manifest.

The act that has everyone bent out of shape is the new Animal Health Act. It was proclaimed on December 3, 2008 with the exception of the sections of the act that refer to penalties. Those sections remain unproclaimed so it begs the question as to whether penalties are enforceable until they are proclaimed. The Animal Health Act outlines three levels of containment for reportable diseases. These are in order of increasing containment control zones, surveillance zones and quarantine. The Act also outlines two levels of disease classifications; reportable and notifiable. Reportable diseases are those which require action to control or eradicate because they are a threat to animal or human health, food safety or the economy. At this point the Act does not list any reportable diseases for horses although it does have an extensive list for other species. Notifiable diseases are those which simply require monitoring for trade purposes or to understand their presence in the province. No actions will be taken for notifiable diseases. Only two notifiable diseases are currently listed for horses. These are West Nile and the neurotropic variant form of Equine Herpes Type-1.

The aforementioned article also discussed increased protocols for biosecurity. The Act does not specify definitive biosecurity protocols but rather gives the Chief Provincial Veterinarian the ability to establish those protocols in conjunction with any order under the containment levels mentioned earlier. Biosecurity need not be as restrictive as the article implied. So for now, cowboy logic prevails for biosecurity on horse operations. Don't share grooming tools, saddle blankets or water buckets. Isolate strange horses until disease threat is minimized and disinfect stalls and trailers between horses. Protocols that are too restrictive can have unintended consequences. They can prevent horses from developing natural immunity to disease to the point that should exposure occur, the results can be devastating. The horse industry in this province is by and large based on

recreation. Restrictive protocols may prevent breed associations, ag societies or 4-H horse clubs from sponsoring horse events all to the detriment of the horse industry in the province. Sure we may be sacrificing some inter-provincial or international trade but we probably have more economic horse activity within the province than we have outside. The spectre of unwanted horses may also become a reality should horse owners find biosecurity protocols too onerous to deal with.

The Traceability Premise Identification Regulation is attached to the Animal Health Act and it is the regulation dealing with horses on premises. Horses are a recordable animal under the regulation and as such, all horse owners are required to obtain a premise identification **account** which is a unique identifying number assigned to an owner. Individual animals do not require registration under this regulation. Furthermore, owners of premises with horses present must also apply for a premise identification account even if they do not own any of the animals. This would be the case in a commingling site. A commingling site is a premise where recordable animals owned by different owners are kept together either temporarily or permanently. Examples of commingling sites for horse owners would be boarding stables, ag society or exhibition grounds, and race tracks. In addition premise owners must apply for a premise identification **number** which is unique identifying number assigned to a premise. The premise owner must specify where the premise is, either by land location, LINC number, geo-reference, surveyed parcel description, federal land or a street address and provide contact information for the owner. The premise owner must also list the recordable species resident on the premise along with the potential number of each species that could possibly reside on the premise. A commingling site operator must provide premise identification numbers to horse owners who have horses on the site and the horse owner then in turn enters that number in his or her application for a premise identification account.

Additional information on premise identification and the forms can be found on Alberta Agriculture's website using this link: [www.agriculture.alberta.ca/premises](http://www.agriculture.alberta.ca/premises) . So for now or until we hear differently relax and go out and enjoy your horses. They'll thank you for it.

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