



Covid-19 Protocol for Breeders of Suffolk Horses

17th April 2020

The Suffolk Horse is a critically endangered Rare Breed and cannot afford a year in which few foals are born.

The Suffolk Horse Society (SHS) fully recognises the extremely serious and unprecedented situation facing this country and the wider world.

Through full and strict adherence to the protocols below, the SHS is able to demonstrate it can responsibly comply with the current Government advice.

All Suffolk Horse breeders and their employees involved in this protocol must be in good health (absence of clinical signs and with no temperature), not in-contact persons, or vulnerable people at risk.

At this time, if you cannot follow all of this protocol you should not be moving and transporting Suffolk horses for breeding. Human health and NHS resources are the priority.

Background

On Monday 23 March, the UK Government introduced restrictions requiring people to stay at home as far as possible to help reduce the spread of the coronavirus outbreak. These restrictions have been extended until 7th May, at least, and include:

- Requiring people to stay at home, except for very limited purposes. These are:
 - shopping for basic necessities, for example food and medicine, which must be as infrequent as possible.
 - one form of exercise a day, for example a run, walk, or cycle - alone or with members of your household.
 - any medical need, or to provide care or to help a vulnerable person.
 - travelling to and from work, but only where this absolutely cannot be done from home.
- Closing non-essential shops and community spaces
- Stopping all gatherings of more than two people in public

Unless a Suffolk mare owner also possesses a stallion, essential breeding work cannot be carried out at home and the SHS, on the advice available, believes the protocols listed below will allow the absolutely necessary travel and activities for Suffolk Horse breeding operations.

They are based on latest Government guidance, and will be updated if this changes.

General

1. **Only** staff who are essential to the care of horses, and who absolutely cannot work from home, should continue to travel to work during the period of these restrictions.
2. The standard of care should be focused primarily on upholding the welfare of the horses in their care. Any non-essential activity beyond this **must** be carefully considered and, where possible, avoided.
3. Suffolk Horse Studs **must** close to any visitors, other than those that are essential for the welfare of the horses in their care.
4. Staff **must** follow all Government advice relating to good hygiene and virus transmission, and carry out hand washing and sanitising procedures including any surfaces/handles/equipment.
5. Hygiene is vitally important when handling new equine arrivals. Staff will use hand wipes, gels, disinfectants to clean any related equipment both before and after handling.
6. Staff **must** follow all Government advice on social distancing at all times. Staff **must** remain at least two metres apart and avoid gatherings of more than two people, apart from members of their own household. Gatherings of more than two should be avoided **except** where absolutely essential for horse welfare. In these instances numbers should be limited and social distancing **must** still apply.
7. Contact between staff of studs and any **essential** suppliers **must** also comply with the Government advice on social distancing, with no more than two people present unless they are of the same household.
8. Veterinary advice by phone and email should be sought on ensuring effective sanitisation and isolation.
9. Local procedures **must** be recorded and displayed as appropriate and there **must** be records that staff have been fully trained.

Transport

1. All appointments **must** be made in advance of travel.
2. Associated paperwork **must** be completed and sent electronically in advance, including passport information.
3. The vehicle used for transport **must** be disinfected before and after every visit including any handles, the ramp or other areas where stud staff may have had, or will have, contact.
4. Staff travelling in the horsebox **must** comply with Government advice on social distancing (as outlined in item 6 above).
5. Unless there is an emergency or human or animal welfare requirement related to the animal being transported or the driver, it is prohibited to stop on the journey.
6. At the destination, the unloading and re-loading of the horse **must** be conducted by the staff at the destination with no contact with the travelling staff. Hygiene precautions must be followed at every stage of this loading process, using robust disinfection processes of the horsebox handles and any equipment, and hand washing.
7. Staff travelling in the horsebox should only exit the horsebox at the location they are visiting to use welfare facilities, using all sanitary precautions. There must be no direct contact with the staff on the site.