

Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering Update

Brief Hazard Identification Guide for Equine Farm Facilities and Equipment



Introduction

This bulletin is a brief guide for identifying facility and equipment-related hazards on equine farms. Minimizing, controlling, or eliminating hazards is the most important thing you can do to improve safety on your farm. Education and training is important, of course, but nobody is perfect, so preventing injuries means addressing the hazards that can cause injury.

There are some things this guide does not cover. First, it does not cover the hazards of horses themselves. Animal behavior, and proper handling of animals, is best discussed with a veterinarian, equine specialist, or someone experienced in handling horses. Second, this guide cannot cover every hazard found on any individual farm, since every farm varies. It is intended to serve as a general guide to owners in inspecting their farms for the more common hazards.

Facilities

- Are all gates, latches, fences, doors, railings, and stalls strong enough and in good condition?
- Are slipping hazards present, like wet areas in walkways that need a more abrasive surface, or loose materials on walkways or stairs? What about tripping hazards like broken concrete, cords across walkways, loose twine, tools or other items stored on steps, broken steps, etc. ?
- Are all wood floors free of rotted or broken boards, exposed nails, etc.?
- Are all ladders in good condition, including sturdy and tight rungs, and good feet if portable?
- Do all electrical breaker boxes, junction boxes, switches, and outlets have their cover plates? Any of them broken or loose? Any exposed wires or connections that should be covered? Is there any external wiring subject to rodent damage that is not inside a conduit? Are proper light fixtures used for any lights located where they might get broken?
- Are ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) installed in wet areas? Are portable GFCI cords used in wet situations where the outlet is not GFCI protected?
- Are all cords (extension cords, cords on electric tools, etc) in good condition without cracks, cuts, abrasions, etc.? Do all three-pronged plugs have the third prong (the ground prong)?
- Are all pharmaceuticals and other chemicals or potentially hazardous substances stored safely in cabinets, and locked if children or visitors are around?
- Are all pesticides stored separately away from feed?
- Are there any fire hazards like open flames or oily rags which should be removed? Are fully-charged fire extinguishers present and accessible, not blocked by stored items?
- Is a first aid kit readily available and located where everyone, including visitors, can find it?
- Are emergency phone numbers and directions to your farm posted in the barn? Consider a situation where a visitor might have to make those calls if you are injured or ill.
- Are warning signs present for visitors as appropriate? They may be unfamiliar with horses.

Powered Equipment

- Do all tractors have ROPS (Roll-Over Protective Structures), either ROPS frames or ROPS cabs? Is the seat belt present and functional?
- Are all tractors in good operating condition, including proper lighting and marking if taken on roads?
- Are all powered machines and implements in good operating condition? Have they been properly maintained, and properly adjusted, to minimize the need for adjustment or repairs in the field or when people are in a hurry?
- Are all wagons and other trailing equipment in good operating condition, including tires? Are safety hitch pins used that cannot jump out from bumps and jolts?
- Do all PTO (power take-off) drivelines have full, functional, non-broken shielding? Are PTO shields present on the back of the tractor and on the implement where the driveline attaches?
- Are all shields in place on any stationary or mobile powered equipment? This includes everything from electric motors with belts or chains, augers and conveyors, etc., to tractor-powered equipment.
- Can electrical equipment be “locked out” (e.g., shutting off the power and putting a lock on the switchbox) to prevent someone from turning it on while another person is working on it?
- Is proper personal protective equipment readily available where it is needed, clean and in good condition? This might be in the shop, chemical handling area, or other places on the farm.

Society has recognized that reducing automobile fatalities includes having safer cars and roadways. Having safer facilities and equipment on your farm reduces your risk of farm-related injuries or fatalities.