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Commissioner

COVID-19 GUIDANCE for EQUESTRIAN FACILITIES in PHASE TWO REOPEN PLAN

Updated: February 23, 2021

The practices and policies below are for equine-related facilities to implement as necessary in an effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. These recommendations are in addition to guidance provided by the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), [USDA](#), [Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development](#), and other federal agencies.

While this document cannot encompass all scenarios, the following information is meant to clarify what equine activities will be permissible in phase one of Connecticut's reopening plan on May 20, 2020, and subsequent updates during the phase one period. In addition to strict adherence to CDC guidelines and business recommendations put forth by the Department of Economic Community Development, the Connecticut Department of Agriculture recommends the following measures regarding equine activities.

The Department of Economic Community and Development has released its [Sector Rules and Certification for May 20th Reopen](#). **All businesses subject to these guidelines are required to self-certify prior to opening on May 20th. The certification system can be accessed [here](#).**

Outdoor gathering sizes shall be in accordance with capacity limits per [DECD Sector Rules](#).

Employee Health Guidance

- Daily health check: Ask employees resuming on-premise work to confirm they have not experienced Covid-19 CDC defined symptoms and to monitor their own symptoms, including cough, shortness of breath, or any two of the following symptoms:
 - Fever, chill, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell
 - Employees should stay home if sick.
 - **In the event of a positive Covid-19 case:** Employees shall inform their employers and follow state testing and contact tracing protocols.

Barn Guidelines

Below are guidelines/best practices to allow riding and/or driving lessons in addition to remaining compliant with the Governor's directions.

- Multiple designated areas may exist and be utilized at the same facility.

- Hand sanitizer must be available and used at the entry and exit of facility.
- Ensure personnel maintain a 6 ft. social distance, unless safety or core function of the work activity requires a shorter distance.
 - Any time personnel are less than 6 ft. apart, they must wear acceptable face coverings.
- When possible, adjust workplace hours, stagger arrival/departure times, create A/B teams, and/or schedule only one team in an area at a time.
- Tightly confined areas (feed and storage rooms, tack rooms, etc.) should be occupied by only one individual at a time, unless all occupants are wearing face coverings. At no time should the number of occupants exceed 10 people.
- When feasible, doors and windows of barns and other indoor spaces should be opened to allow as much exchange of fresh air as possible.
- Personnel are responsible for checking clients in and out of the facility.
- All clients must maintain social distance of at least 6 ft. and must not congregate.
- No client shall be allowed on the property if they, or a family member, have shown symptoms or a fever within the last 72 hours.
- Clients and guests must wear acceptable face coverings at all times when social distancing is not possible.
- Any client considered “at risk” due to age or existing medical condition should contact the facility owner in advance to arrange any special requirements for visitation.
- Must sanitize all commonly touched public surfaces after every use including tack, tools, farm machinery, grooming supplies, buckets, helmets, etc.
- When sharing equipment or supplies between people and/or horses, sanitize and isolate the items for 24 hours. See the following notes and exceptions:
 - Non-porous materials (leather bridles/saddles/halters, gate latches, door handles, spray nozzle) harbor the virus longer than porous materials (cotton lead ropes, saddle pads).
 - Clean communal leather tack daily with tack cleaner.
 - Disinfect gate latches, spray nozzles, cross tie snaps, pitchforks, wheelbarrows, and other frequently used items regularly or after contact with personnel.
 - Stall door latches, hose ends, light switches and feed scoops should be cleaned and disinfected frequently.
- Stagger scheduled lesson times to allow for ample time in between to disinfect/clean tack and eliminate interaction between groups.
- Avoid transfer of paperwork - reports support contagions are easily transferred to/from paper products. All administrative processes, including payments, liability waivers, and contracts for board, training, lessons, and other services, should be completed electronically or via touchless systems when possible.

Boarders

- If boarders use shared tack/gear belonging to the facility, the items shall be sanitized and isolated for 24 hours prior to subsequent use.
- When possible, schedule boarders’ arrival times to limit large gatherings of people.

Private/Semi-Private Riding and/or Driving Lessons

- Lessons shall be limited to small group lessons at this time. Total capacity of outdoor recreation group shall not exceed 25 people. Total capacity of indoor gatherings shall not exceed 10 people.
 - Should a facility have the capacity for multiple designated riding spaces to hold lessons, start times shall be staggered to limit interaction between all parties.
- All lessons shall be held outside, weather and safety permitting.
 - Indoor riding areas shall only be used for activities which are imperative to the health and wellbeing of the animal; and then, only if it is not possible to perform those activities outdoors due to weather or safety.
 - Indoor recreation shall be limited to 50% capacity per [DECD Sector Rules](#).
- When possible, students should tack/untack their horse or pony themselves. If a rider is unable to tack up their horse or pony, barn personnel shall do so for them.
- Lesson students are encouraged to bring their personal riding equipment (helmet, boots, gloves, etc.) to and from the barn.
- When sharing riding equipment (helmet, boots, etc.), the items shall be sanitized and isolated for 24 hours prior to subsequent use.
- Tack and grooming tools used by clients must be sanitized by staff immediately following each lesson.
- Staff may assist with mounting/dismounting or entry into/out of carts, but all present must wear a mask. Mask shall always remain in possession of rider/driver.

Trail Guidance

- Trail riding and/or driving activities shall be limited to 25 people, including staff.
- Riders and/or drivers and staff shall wear face masks while mounting and dismounting horses. Masks may be removed from face once there is adequate distance between people. Mask shall always remain in possession of rider/driver.

Clinics (Specialized lessons with spectators)

- Clinics shall be limited to posted capacity limits.
- All efforts shall be made to limit shared equipment.
- Spectators must follow social distancing guidelines.

Sale Horse Guidance

- Viewing of horses and/or ponies for sale/breeding purposes must be done in an outdoor arena or area, and by appointment only.
- All interactions must be conducted outdoors and must adhere to strict social distancing of 6 ft. between customers and employees.

Communications Plan

- Responsible Parties must self-certify that they have reviewed and understand the state-issued industry guidelines, and that they will implement them.

- Responsible Parties should develop a communications plan for employees, visitors, and customers that includes applicable instructions, training, signage, and a consistent means to provide employees with information. Responsible Parties may consider developing webpages, text and email groups, and social media.

For additional guidance for the agricultural industry, please visit the Connecticut Department of Agriculture's page, [Resources for Farmers During COVID-19](#).

Please reach out to AGR.COVID19@ct.gov with any COVID-19 related questions or concerns you may have. The Connecticut Department of Agriculture is actively working to support our industry and will continue to provide the most up to date information as it becomes available.