

## Equine Health Certificates: What's new?

By Carolyn Oppenheimer, DVM

Most horse owners know that historically, a veterinary examination and a health certificate is required within 30 days of interstate travel. Likewise, many horse owners have experienced the inconvenience of forgetting to acquire the health certificate until the night before impending travel. This usually makes for an interesting discussion with your veterinarian as to why you "must have" an emergency examination at 10pm! A health certificate is designed as a first line of defense to the spread of disease. A physical exam should be performed by your veterinarian to be sure that no overt signs of illness or disease are apparent. Of particular concern are those diseases that are reportable to the government which are often foreign or emerging, very contagious or cause a high degree of mortality. This group of diseases includes: Strangles, EIA (Equine Infectious Anemia), EVA (Equine Viral Arteritis), Equine Herpes Virus-1, Vesicular Stomatitis, and Rabies.

Official certificates of veterinary inspection (OCVI or better known as "health certificates") allow horses to cross state lines with the security of knowing that, at time of examination, there were no signs of illness and that the horse's Coggins, which tests for Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA), was negative. It is important to remember that just because a horse has a health certificate does not guarantee that he is disease free. Incubation periods of diseases vary and a horse can appear completely healthy on physical exam before exhibiting signs of illness the following day. Therefore, if any abnormalities are noted by the owner in the days or weeks after a health certificate is obtained, the horse should be seen by a veterinarian again.

In the past, health certificates had to be written within 30 days of crossing the state lines. Recently, several options for extending the health certificates from 30 days to 6 months have been introduced. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services offers the Equine Event Extension and Equine Interstate Passport Card. GlobalVet Link also has an option called the GoPass.

All three of these options are intended for horses that are involved in interstate travel to shows or other equine events. The Equine Interstate Passport Card and the GoPass have digital photographs and are accepted in these states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia. A paper document called the Equine Event Extension is only accepted in the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia. These documents expire either 6 months from the date on the OCVI or when the Coggins test expires, whichever is earlier.

After a health certificate is obtained from an accredited veterinarian, either a horse owner or a veterinarian may submit digital photos for use with the Equine Interstate Passport Card. Before these extensions may be used, the premise that houses the horse must be registered with the State. After the initial effort of registering the premise and applying for the extension, this should make shipping for interstate events more convenient.

For information about health certificate extensions and details of how to apply, you can also visit the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services: Division of Animal Industry [http://www.freshfromflorida.com/ai/main/equine\\_ecard.shtml](http://www.freshfromflorida.com/ai/main/equine_ecard.shtml)

Contact Brandon Equine Medical Center at 813-643-7177 or email [info@brandonequine.com](mailto:info@brandonequine.com) with any questions regarding this topic.

*This article originally appeared in Horse & Pony magazine in October 2011 and is reprinted with their permission.*