



Left: preparation is key in case of an outbreak of disease; keep a kit including footbath, disposable protective gear and disinfection tools ready, just in case



remove that first, you are just making your stable smell pretty.”

She also stresses the importance of correct contact time: “Disinfectant needs time to work – if it’s washed away it won’t be effective.”

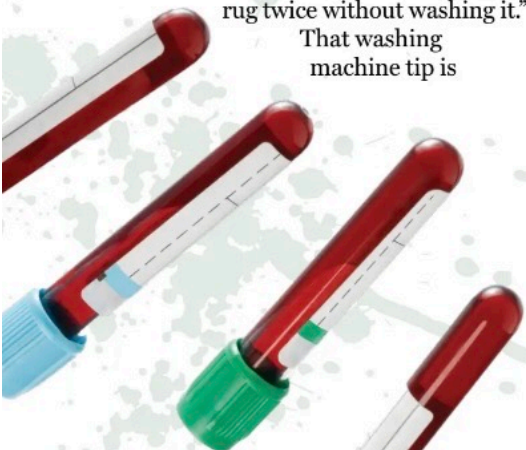
Rebecca Bruford, head nurse at the Philip Leverhulme Equine Hospital, agrees that there’s a difference between a stable looking or smelling nice and actually being hygienic.

“Cosmetic cleanliness is important, but it is sensible to focus on risk-based hygiene,” she says. “Areas that could be overlooked can be things like string tied in a stable, so remove string between the turnover of horses, or use tie-up bungees that are washable. Wash food and water bowls with detergent and rinse well. Clean cross-tie clips frequently if that area is communal.”

**A**NDREA points out that kit which goes out with the horse, travelling to competitions, clinics or camps, might need more frequent washing.

“I don’t think headcollars and cooler blankets get washed enough,” she says. “Sneak them home and put them in your own washing machine! We hot wash at 60°C and then tumble dry. Disinfectant is put in the wash and we never use the same rug twice without washing it.”

That washing machine tip is



## “Focus on risk-based hygiene over cosmetic cleanliness”

EQUINE NURSE REBECCA BRUFORD

perhaps best kept secret from a non-horsey other half...

She also says it’s worth being prepared for the worst.

“I know it might seem like overkill, but have a kit ready for an outbreak of a disease like strangles – a footbath, disposable hazmat suits, gloves – if it’s ready to go, then hopefully you never have to use it,” she says.

**E**VEN these dedicated horse hygienists have jobs they hate. “Poo-picking, I will avoid that at all costs,” admits Jade. “Of course, when they read this, they’ll send me out poo-picking now!”

Luckily, they also have top tips for making dreaded jobs easier.

## Daily routine on top yard

JADE ROBERTS outlines the routine at David Doel’s eventing yard:

- All the stables are mucked out every morning. Then they’re skipped out at lunch, afternoon (the slightly dirtier ones are mucked out again) and evening.
- All water buckets and haynets come out before you start to muck out.

“Rubber mats can strain your back,” says Rosina, “We use mole grips [locking pliers], which make moving the mats easier and safer.”

“Get one of those little knapsacks, it doesn’t have to be one of the big Ghostbusters ones!” advises Andrea. “You can get them in the pound shop garden section, they’re so handy, you pop in a bit of disinfectant and you can do your stables, trailer, even take it away with you to a stay-away show.”

But sometimes there’s no substitute for good old-fashioned elbow grease.

“We once bought a bucket washer not too dissimilar to an industrial dishwasher for all our buckets,” remembers Jayne. “However, it turned out it broke more than it was useful, a waste of money. Goes to show you cannot beat manual scrubbing.”

Scientific understanding of bacteria, viruses, how they’re transmitted and the dangers of antimicrobial resistance is increasing all the time. Arming ourselves with the latest knowledge will help us keep our horses safe and reduce the risk of avoidable diseases.

Rosina says we shouldn’t be afraid to ask the experts around us: “If you’d like advice on hygiene and protocols, do speak to your vet or veterinary nurse as they’ll be happy to help you put a simple plan in place, so you can see what good practice looks like and where improvements might be needed.”

And, as Andrea concludes, “The cleaner the environment, the healthier the horse at the end of the day.” **H&H**

● To top up beds, take the bank down and add fresh bedding to the banks. If fresh bedding is laid in the middle of the bed, you’re not rotating the bed. If your fork doesn’t go nicely into the bank, you know it hasn’t been turned.

● I prefer that the loose bits are swept out rather than into the bed. Fresh forage shouldn’t be put on top of the crummy bits, which are part bedding and part seeds from the forage, as it festers and gets moist. That is not good for the horses’ respiratory systems.