



INFORMATION AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Understanding the biosecurity perspectives of equestrian competition organizers (REB# 21-11-001)

Principal Investigators (PIs): Dr. Amy Greer, Tier II Canada Research Chair in Population Disease Modeling and Associate Professor and Dr. Terri O’Sullivan Associate Professor, Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph

Co-investigator: Gabrielle Turcotte, PhD Student, Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph.

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You are invited to participate in a research project entitled: **Understanding the biosecurity perspectives of equestrian competition organizers (REB# 21-11-001)**. This research project seeks to investigate the perspectives of competition organizers on biosecurity at Ontario equestrian competitions. The knowledge generated from this study will aid in the implementation and planning process associated with biosecurity protocols that will not only be efficient for organizers to use but also promote equine health and welfare.

Please read the information about the study presented in this document. The document includes details on the study, including the study’s risks and benefits. You should take as much time as you need to make your decision. If you are not clear on the content of this document, you can ask the study investigator or study staff to explain anything that you do not understand and make sure that all your questions have been answered before providing your consent to participate in this study.

Before you make your decision, feel free to talk about this study with anyone you wish.

You are also encouraged to print this Introduction and Consent document for your reference.

Background/purpose of the study

With the current COVID-19 pandemic as well as recent outbreaks of Equine Herpesvirus (EHV-1), the 2021 competition season began to include a required Equine Biosecurity and Response Plan Self-Assessment for each competition venue. This plan must outline the biosecurity measures the competition organizers have in place at the competition venue and how they plan to deal with a potential introduction of an infectious disease that could lead to an outbreak. Biosecurity protocols are only as useful as their implementation; thus, it is important to understand the perspectives of competition organizers on what they deem most important with respect to biosecurity and their potential reaction to new planning requirements. Online, individual, semi-structured interviews will be used to understand the various ideas and viewpoints of those involved in all aspects of organizing equestrian events in Ontario, Canada. A semi-structured interview is one where the interviewer has a predetermined list of questions to ask as well as allowing the freedom for additional unplanned questions or elaborations as the conversation requires. The ideas and perspectives shared in this study will help to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of these requirements, resulting in a smoother implementation process for organizers as well as help to maintain a high degree of health and welfare of Ontario competition horses.

Objectives of the study:

- I. To identify and describe the main perspectives of competition organizers regarding biosecurity at equestrian competitions in Ontario, Canada.

Study design:

This is a qualitative study that will use semi-structured interviews to aid us in gaining a deeper understanding of the perspectives of competition organizers towards biosecurity measures at equestrian competitions in Ontario, Canada.

Criteria for inclusion/exclusion in the study:

You must satisfy the following criteria to be included in this study:

- Be an adult over the age of 18.
- Currently have or have previously had a role (in the last 5 years) in organizing one or more Equestrian Canada sanctioned or unsanctioned equestrian competitions in the province of Ontario.

If you do not fulfill any one of the above-mentioned criteria, you will not be able to participate in this study.

Study Visits, Procedures, and your responsibility:

This study will not require any direct visits from the study personnel. If you agree to participate, you will submit an electronic survey as a consent to participate in this study. Information about how long you have been in your current role, the number and types of competitions you have helped to organize, your education, background, gender, age, etc. will also be collected in this survey.

The researchers will then contact you to determine an appropriate date and time for the online interview using Microsoft Teams or via telephone call if the participant does not have access to an adequate internet source. An in-person interview may be an option for participants based on the COVID-19 guidelines at the time of the interview. You will be invited to a meeting with the study co-ordinator (Gabrielle Turcotte). The researcher will ask pre-determined questions relating to your experience with organizing Ontario equestrian competitions and the equine event biosecurity and response plan self-assessment. These questions will help us to enhance our understanding of perspectives and attitudes of competition organizers with respect to biosecurity at Ontario equestrian competitions. While the interviewer will be taking notes, the of the meeting will be recorded and transcribed using the Microsoft Team/Microsoft Office platform to ensure accurate reporting of the information that you provide in the interview.

Your commitment as a participant will be to submit an electronic consent and attend an online semi-structured interview hosted using the Microsoft Teams.

Your time commitment required in this study:

The study requires up to 75 minutes of time commitment from the participants. This includes the time required for providing an electronic consent, the completion of an enrollment survey, and participation in a semi-structured interview.

Potential risks of participating in this study:

Taking part in this study has minimal risks. The risks we know of is that some people might feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions related to their experiences organizing equestrian competitions. In such instances, you may stop answering a question or skip a question

without any negative consequences. Likewise, while we will adhere to industry standards for conducting the interview, data storage, and security, it is possible this data could be illegally accessed which may result in social risk (loss of privacy).

There is also the possibility of risks that we do not know about. Please contact the study investigator or study personnel if you have any concerns about risks.

Potential benefits of participating in this study:

You will not have any direct benefit from participating in this study. However, you will have an opportunity to share some of your experiences and perspectives on competition biosecurity.

Learning from this study may help influence future biosecurity protocols at Ontario equestrian competitions and provide insight on how to create the most effective and efficient planning process that maintains equine health and welfare at these events.

Costs and Incentives:

This study will have no direct cost to you and require minimal time. As a token of appreciation, each participant will receive a Tim Hortons gift card worth \$10.00. Every participant will be given this gift card even if you skipped or refused to answer some questions. Upon receipt of the gift card, you are required to acknowledge the receipt by reply email.

Confidentiality:

Any information you share with us will be used solely for the purpose of this research and your privacy will be protected.

Your demographic data, collected while obtaining consent from you, will be stored on the dedicated servers of Qualtrics. The access to this data will be restricted to the research team. The survey data will be downloaded to a password-protected, encrypted computer. Once downloaded, your personal identifiers will be removed, and the data will be stored under a unique anonymous participant ID. The master list that can link the anonymous participant ID to you will be stored on a password protected, encrypted computer. The access to the master list will be restricted to the principal investigators. The master list will be used for data validation purpose only. Your email address will only be used to schedule your interview and to send you an electronic gift card. Once we have distributed the gift your personal identifiers will be deleted from our computers.

The audio recording of the interview will be made on the Microsoft Teams platform or using an audio recording application (ie. Voice Memos etc.). The audio recordings will be downloaded to the password protected and encrypted computer of the researchers and the recording on the server will be deleted. Your identity will be kept confidential by using a pseudonym instead of your real name during the interview. The audio recordings will be transcribed using a feature of Microsoft Teams/Microsoft Office, reviewed, and validated by the researchers for accuracy and completeness, and deidentified after which the audio recordings will be deleted from the researchers' computer. The transcripts will be password protected and stored on a password protected, encrypted computer/laptop and will also be backed up to a password protected, encrypted external drive. In the rare event that the computer is stolen, the data cannot be accessed as the data on the computer are not accessible.

Data analysis will be performed in coded form. Linkage of the transcript with some simple demographic information, will only occur on password-protected, encrypted computers during data analysis and validation of the data. Once data analysis is completed and when the research findings are published, the survey data will be securely deleted from our servers and hard drives.

Following completion of the study, the coded data will be stored on a password protected, encrypted computer. The access to this data will be limited to researchers in the primary investigator's lab for academic purposes.

However, please note that full confidentiality cannot be guaranteed while data are in transit over the internet. It is recommended that the participant fill in the consent form and attend the interview using their personal devices over a secure internet.

Participation and withdrawal from the Study:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. **You are free to answer only questions you are comfortable with and skip any questions during the interview.** If at any point during your involvement in the research study you decide you would no longer like to participate, feel free to let researchers know this. In this case, any data collected to that point will be securely deleted. However, once we have coded the transcript and securely deleted the audio recordings, your interview data could not be identified and cannot be excluded from the study.

Additionally, any information for participants who completed the enrollment questionnaire who are not selected for the interview will be deleted from the questionnaire's server and the computers of the researchers

Publication and dissemination of study findings:

The findings of this study may be presented at conferences and published in peer-reviewed journals. We will additionally communicate the research findings to the affected stakeholders via informal networks and professional organizations of equestrian events.

We will not use your name or any personal identifiers in any of the publications or communications resulting from this study. For example, we will use quotes from the interview without using your name or any personal identifiers.

Access to the publication of the research findings:

After the research is complete, you can contact the Principal Investigator Dr. Amy Greer at agreer@uoguelph.ca to obtain a web link or a copy of the study findings, or study presentations. The study findings may also be published in peer-reviewed journals and presented at local and/or international conferences, and in the outlets of professional networks of the equine industry.

Future use of the data:

The data generated from this study will be used to inform biosecurity protocols at equestrian competitions across Ontario.

The deidentified data set generated from this study will be stored and may be used for educational purpose by the members of Dr. Amy Greer's laboratory.

Conflict of Interest:

The researchers do not have any conflicts of interest to declare.

Your Rights as a Participant:

You do not waive any legal rights by agreeing to take part in this study.

This project (REB#: 21-11-001) has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board for compliance with federal guidelines for research involving human participants. The Research Ethics Board is a group of people, independent of the study team, who oversee the ethical conduct of research

studies. If you have any questions about your rights and welfare as a research participant in this study or have concerns about this study (REB#: 21-11-001), please contact:

Manager, Research Ethics; University of Guelph;
Phone: (519) 824-4120 (ext. 56606)
e-mail: reb@uoguelph.ca

Questions and or concerns about the Study:

If you have any questions, concerns or would like to speak to the study team for any reason, please contact:

Dr. Amy Greer (Principal Investigator)
Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph,
Phone: (519) 824-4120 ext. 54070
e-mail: agreer@uoguelph.ca

Consent:

- I have read the information provided for the study Understanding the biosecurity perspectives of equestrian competition organizers (REB#: 21-11-001).
- This study has been explained to me and any questions I had have been answered.
- I confirm that I fulfill the inclusion criteria of this study.
- I agree with the use of my information as described in this form and agree to take part in this study as outlined above.
- I agree with the use of any quotation from my interview without my name in the final report.
- I know that participation in this study is voluntary and I may leave the study at any time.
- I agree to receive a gift card for my participation in the study.
- I have been given a copy of this information

If you would like to provide your consent and move forward with your participation, please follow the link below to the pre-interview questionnaire:

https://uoguelph.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cZ2dgMpIFSy0Prg

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