

IMPORTING SPORT HORSES: FROM THE JETWAY TO JUMPING

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Horses must have blood drawn when they enter the United States

FROM THE Rolex US Equestrian Open Grand Prix in Wellington, FL, to the Global Champions Tour (GCT) destinations in Miami and New York City, the United States is home to some of the most prestigious international jumping competitions in the industry, attracting horses from around the world to compete on American soil. Veterinarians from Palm Beach Equine Clinic (PBEC) in Wellington, FL, have extensive experience caring for horses arriving from other countries for these exciting events and maintaining their health during their stay at competitions.

Once the plane touches down at the airport, the journey to the show ring is just beginning. As each international horse steps off the plane, a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) veterinarian draws blood to test for equine piroplasmosis, dourine, glanders, and equine infectious anemia (EIA) before the horse is moved to a USDA quarantine facility where it will stay for about 72 hours.

Dr. Janet Greenfield Davis of PBEC recommends that horses arrive in the U.S. at least three days before the FEI jog at

their competition venue to ensure enough time to clear quarantine and travel to the show venue, while also confirming their arrival time lines up with the opening of FEI stabling.

Another factor to consider is whether the horse will quarantine for Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM). All mares and stallions will be quarantined and tested within the U.S. unless they are entering a CEM waiver tent on the show grounds. Mares will spend approximately 21 days in CEM quarantine, and stallions will stay



approximately 35 days. Stallions will breed two mares as part of the requirement. All eligible breeding equines, including mares and stallions, not entering CEM quarantine arriving from other countries to the show must be stabled in the CEM waiver tent, a separate, secure barn at the horse show, to avoid any potential accidental exposure to CEM, although that is a rare event. This area is regulated by the USDA and under restriction and monitoring.

Horses are not free to move about the showgrounds unattended. It is not offered

PBEC veterinarians can be on hand to meet international horses when they arrive in the country

at every horse show; it is mostly used for horses that will spend a short amount of time in the U.S. If Dr. Greenfield Davis had to choose, she would bring her horses in early and partake in quarantine.

Biosecurity and horse health for these international athletes remain a priority throughout the event. Temperature checks are performed upon entry to FEI stabling

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and twice a day, and any horses with a fever are quickly isolated and treated. FEI stabling areas are closely monitored to ensure animal health and welfare are top priority. For horses in CEM barns, a USDA representative will accompany the horse to and from the riding areas.

Veterinarians from PBEC often travel to top horse shows in the U.S., including the GCT New York, which was scheduled this year, to provide on-site care to the equine athletes. Luckily, Dr. Greenfield Davis reports that many international horses are accustomed to traveling long distances, and cases presented upon arrival tend to be mild.

"Dehydration is the most common complication. Occasionally, a horse will develop cellulitis on one of their legs from a nick or cut. Some of them may arrive with a little bit of respiratory distress, but the airplanes are pretty well ventilated," Dr. Greenfield Davis shared, recommending that horses be closely monitored by caretakers for signs of inappetence, dehydration, or lethargy so that fluids or antibiotics can be administered if needed.

While there are many things to consider when it comes to equine health while traveling for international competition, Palm Beach Equine Clinic is committed to providing world-class care throughout the entire process to keep equine athletes performing their best. ☺

Reach out to us at 561-793-1599 for any questions about the importing process for international athletes.