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HORSE AROUND

New Mexico

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Papers, Please: Documents You Need for Your Horse

By Stacie G. Boswell, DVM, DACVS

To own a horse in New Mexico, you need legal documentation that proves ownership, health, and compliance with New Mexico equine travel laws. You also need a reliable way your horse can be identified, if he is ever loose or lost, or you are unfortunate enough to have a horse stolen. Here, Stacie Boswell, DVM, outlines how to properly document your horse.

Identification

There are many ways to identify a horse. Temporary ways include halter tags, braid-in nametags, or neck collars. Permanent ways include documentation of markings, microchipping, iris scanning, branding, and lip tattoos. Breed associations may also use DNA typing with registration papers as a way to identify individuals.

Natural Identification

Natural ways of identifying a horse are often used for paperwork that accompanies that horse. This information includes breed, color, sex, age, markings, and hair whorl patterns. This information has the advantage of being permanent, but the disadvantage is that it requires paper documentation to be useful.



A horse's irises are unique. A company called eyeD has developed digital technology to scan irises as a form of identification. These eye scans are stored in their database. Remote storage is a great idea, but the cost and availability of scanners is a disadvantage.

Brands

Branding is a permanent method of identification. A freeze brand results in white hair, and a hot brand results in a lack of hair in the area of the brand. Alpha angle freeze brands also contain information about the horse, such as the breed, the year of birth, and a number which can be used to look up information about the horse.



Lip Tattoos

All horses that race in either the thoroughbred or the quarter horse industries have a permanent lip tattoo. There is information inherent in the marking. In Thoroughbreds, the tattoo begins with a letter that designates the year the horse was born. For example, the letter D designates the year 2000, the letter E 2001, and so forth. After reaching the end of the alphabet, the Jockey Club begins again with the letter A. The American Quarter Horse Association requires a horse to be genotyped and parentage verified before it can be tattooed.



Microchipping

An RFID microchip implanted in a horse (typically in the nuchal ligament of the neck) is a method of permanent identification. The National Animal Identification System accepts a specific type of microchip, although many



are available. Disadvantages are that if a person doesn't have a reader (for example, your neighbor, if your horses happen to get out), they cannot trace the horse.

Tags and Collars

Braid-in nametags have recently gained popularity for horses traveling to trail rides or shows. These are inexpensive and safe to attach to your horse. They have to be re-braided regularly, though.



Neck collars come in both plastic and leather forms. The leather form is much safer, as the leather is thin and will break away under stress. Collars can be worn at all times, and are also handy to catch a horse or lead one a short distance. They can be engraved with the horse's name and your phone number on a plate so anyone who finds the horse has your information. Disadvantages of tags and collars are that the horse can get separated from the tag.



of filling out the form. For many states, horses originating from New Mexico must have a specific statement on their CVI regarding the absence of signs of Vesicular Stomatitis. Typically, a CVI is considered valid for 30 days.

The NMLB website (nmlbonline.com) has excellent resources outlining requirements for horses traveling into, out of, and within the state under "Import/Export/Exhibition of Livestock." Be aware that the NMLB can impose additional restrictions on movement in the event of a disease outbreak.

Bottom Line

The purpose of travel documentation and health-related travel regulations for horses is to control the potential spread of infectious diseases. Meeting the legal requirements and respecting these regulations ensures you are doing your part in protecting the health of your own horses as well as those where you travel.

Documentation for Travel

Be aware that being able to identify a horse does not serve as proof of ownership. New Mexico is a brand inspection state, which means there are only two ways to legally prove ownership of a horse: An official brand that is registered with the New Mexico Livestock Board (NMLB) or the "1-H form" (often called the "permanent hauling card"), which can take the place of a brand. Features such as markings, unregistered brands, scars, and tattoos are considered "distinguishing marks" and are recorded on the 1-H.

In order to cross brand inspection districts in New Mexico, you need both proof of ownership and a current negative Coggins. New Mexico State Police and NMLB officers have the authority to inspect livestock and horses at traffic stops. If you're not in compliance, you could be cited and required to immediately return home.

A health certificate, or Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI), is required for crossing state lines, and may be required at shows or events. A federally accredited veterinarian is needed to fill this form out. The horse must have a current negative Coggins, and a physical examination within 3 days

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