

VET LETTERS AND HEALTH CERTIFICATES

While many Pony Club activities are held close to home, many others require traveling to other states that have restrictions on horses coming into their states. The states are not trying to be difficult; they are trying to protect their own horses from illnesses that out-of-state horses might be carrying. As members of Pony Club we have a responsibility to follow these rules and help protect all horses.

You will need to become familiar with two possible requirements when traveling with your pony: the **Veterinary Letter** and the **Health Certificate**.

WHEN DO I NEED A VETERINARY LETTER?

Appendix F of the 2007 USPC Horse Management Rule Book (see page 101) includes the following information:

All mounts in USPC-sponsored activities should be serviceably sound and healthy. It is recognized, however, that there are many different reasons a mount may be under the care of a veterinarian and on prescribed medications, either long term or for a short period of time. Mounts requiring legal (permitted) prescribed medications during a Pony Club activity must have a valid Veterinary Letter. The letter must be on letterhead from that veterinarian's practice or be stamped with the information for that veterinarian's practice and include the following information:

- Rider name
- Name of mount
- Veterinarian's name and phone number
- Specific diagnosis
- Treatment regimen (medication, route of administration, duration of treatment and additional relevant information)
- Veterinarian's signature and date

HOW LONG IS A VET LETTER VALID?

Part II 21b of the HM Rulebook's amplified instructions states that the Veterinary Letter will be valid for 30 days after your veterinarian signs

and dates the letter. This insures that the information is current and appropriate for the mount participating in the current competition.

WHO GETS THE VET LETTER?

The Vet Letter must be submitted to your Chief Horse Management Judge once you are on the show grounds. This allows the Chief time to make sure that the letter is current and contains the correct information. It also allows time for the Chief to confer with the grounds veterinarian if needed. (Part II -HM 21b)

WHAT HAPPENS IF I HAND IT IN TOO LATE?

You do risk disqualification or elimination from the competition. Most Chiefs will ask for the letter at the competitors' briefing so you should make sure that you hand it in at that time and no later. If the letter is buried in your tack trunk, make sure you at least alert the Chief that you are on your way to get it and will bring it back to the HM office promptly.

Since your Coggins (and Health Certificate, if required) has to be available at all times, a suggestion would be to put your Vet Letter with those documents so they are easily accessible. Putting them in a clear document holder at the front of your HM Handbook might be a good way to keep them accessible and safe.

MAY MY VET JUST USE APPENDIX F IN THE HORSE MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK?

Yes, your veterinarian may complete the form that is in the handbook; however, they must have a stamp that verifies the information on the document. It is preferred that the veterinarian provide all of the information on a piece of their own letterhead.

When you talk to your vet, give him/her a copy of Appendix F so they know what information is required. This will give you a chance to talk about the "Treatment Regimen" and how the medication may or may not affect performance during competition. You may want to refer to the USEF DRUGS AND MEDICATIONS Rulebook (available online at www.usef.org or call the USEF Drug Hotline at (800) 633-2472).

Also, as a Pony Clubber, it is an opportunity to add information to your record book.

MAY I FAX A VET LETTER BEFORE THE RALLY?

There is no rule against faxing a vet letter. However, many rally show grounds will not have a fax machine available. In addition, it is not the Show Secretary or Organizer's responsibility to get the letter to the Chief Horse Management Judge for you AND you run the risk of the fax machine not working. Best practice would be to handle this responsibility early on and have the letter in your possession when you reach the show grounds.

I GIVE MY HORSE BUTE BUT ONLY WHEN HE NEEDS IT. HE MIGHT NOT NEED IT AT THIS RALLY. DO I NEED A VET LETTER?

Absolutely. Bute is a NSAID (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug) and is regulated by the USEF in their Drugs and Medication Rulebook. There are several RESTRICTED MEDICATIONS listed and they can only be administered in certain dosages and in certain combinations with other drugs. If you use too much of a certain medication or combine it with other medications, you may get a positive result on a drug test. It also can be harmful to your horse. Talk to your vet, get a Vet Letter and only give the bute if you feel the horse needs it. Be careful to follow the vet's instructions on the amount to use.

WHEN DO I NEED A HEALTH CERTIFICATE? IS IT THE SAME THING AS A VET LETTER?

The Health Certificate is not the same thing as a Vet Letter. The Vet Letter is information on the medication that your horse receives. The Health Certificate is a statement from your vet saying that your horse is healthy and free from contagious diseases. State licensed veterinarians are also health officers and are able to issue standard Health Certificates that other states will accept. All states have their own requirements for the health certificate, officially called CVI (Certificate of Veterinary Inspection).

I discovered that, in Illinois (where I live), horses are required to present a health certificate from the state they are coming from if they have been out of Illinois for more than 30 days. If I were to take my horse to Kentucky for more than 30 days, I would have to obtain a CVI from a KY veterinarian to legally return to Illinois. Otherwise, my vet will issue a CVI for 30 days, which will cover me for trips out of state for less than 30 days.

For other states, contact your veterinarian or Department of Agriculture for specifics. You also may need to check with the show grounds to see if they have specific requirements for their facilities. Large fairgrounds or other state grounds may have requirements that are more restrictive.

CAN'T MY MOM AND DAD TAKE CARE OF THE VET LETTER AND/OR HEALTH CERTIFICATE?

As a Pony Clubber it is up to you to know and handle these responsibilities for your own activity. It is your responsibility as a competitor to make sure you have a Health Certificate if you need one and to hand the Vet Letter to your Chief.

MY HORSE DOESN'T LIKE TO HAVE HIS EARS TOUCHED, DO I NEED A VET LETTER TO BE EXCUSED FROM HAVING THEM EXAMINED AT TURNOUT?

Horses, like their riders, need to be ready and safe for rally or any competition. With help from someone experienced in handling horses, any type of quirky behavior should be worked on PRIOR to rally. You can learn how to desensitize your horse to clipping or ear touching or sheath cleaning by taking your time and working with someone who knows how to do it. It's not fair to judges, stewards, or other competitors on your team for you to bring a horse that cannot be handled by the people that are there to help you.