



Equine Veterinary Services

Installing a Mare crush

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Occupational Health and Safety Considerations

Work Place Health and Safety, Queensland has put in place strict guidelines for the safe examination of breeding mares. As a result, Equine Veterinary Services has adopted a new 'breeding policy' with the express intension of ensuring the ongoing safety of all our veterinarians.

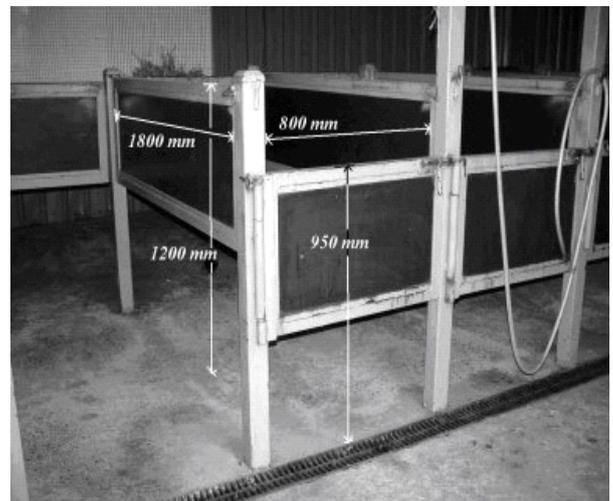
“All reproductive ultrasound examinations on mares must take place in a suitably designed and secure examination crush. No examination, rectal or otherwise, should be performed if the individual veterinarian feels himself or herself to be at risk.”

There is an obligation on both Equine Veterinary Services **and** horse owners to provide a safe workplace. This policy means that all mare owners must **provide a suitable facility at their premises** for the safe examination of mares, **or else transport their mares to the clinic** for examination in our own stocks.

Installing a Crush

Installing a crush is a relatively straightforward process, and will pay dividends in terms of convenience, piece of mind, and quality of work. It is important to consider a few key points before installing a crush. We would be happy to discuss your own particular circumstances with you and offer advice.

- The crush should be safe and secure, and of the correct dimensions.
- Ultrasound examination should be performed in subdued light, preferably inside a building and definitely in the shade.
- The crush should have clear access from the rear, and preferably from both sides.
- Power and cold water should be on hand.
- Walk-through crushes work best



Height at sides: 1200 mm

Height of rear gate: 850 mm

Width: 760—840mm (internal)

Length: 1800 – 1900 mm (internal)

Dimensions

The Hind Gate should be of solid construction and 850mm high. The hinges and latches must also be **very robust** and close easily behind the mare. Weak hinges and latches can be easily broken when a mare rushes back or kicks in the crush. Such damage can lead to serious injury, as the veterinarian may be standing just behind the gate. The hind gate should clear the ground by at least 50mm so that it does not become difficult to close if there is a build up of manure on the ground. It should be hinged from the right.

The Front Gate should be about 1200mm high and sturdy. It should be hinged from the left and easily opened. There should be sufficient room in front of the crush so that, if a mare rushes out, there is an area for the person leading her to move away without getting injured. Gates are much safer and easier to use than poles which can swing dangerously if a mare rushes out when the pole is only half removed. Chains should not be used by themselves in front of a mare because, if a mare tries to jump over the chains, she can trip and fall dangerously damaging herself and the crush. This often leads to personal injury in the rescue effort.

The Width: The crush should be between 760- 840mm wide. If it is too wide, smaller mares can wriggle sideways and try to turn. If it is too narrow big mares can battle to enter.

The Length: Ideally the side walls should be 1800-1900mm long and chest height or higher (i.e. 1200mm high). They can be designed to swing open (in case a mare goes down in the crush) or be of rigid construction. If designed to open they need to have strong hinges and should be of solid construction to 5 cm above the ground. If rigidly fixed, they should either also be solid to ground level or only hold the mare at chest height using a wide panel along the side. Multiple open parallel poles to the ground can lead to a mare get her legs stuck through the bars.

To help confine shorter mares at the back of the crush, a chest pole can be used. Holes are placed in the side panels at a height of 1200mm and at 300mm intervals from the front. A pole can then be placed across the crush through these holes to confine the mares towards the rear of the crush, making it easier and safer to reach shorter mares.

The Floor can either be dirt or concrete however, if you are going to have a lot of mares using the crush, concrete will be easier to keep clean and result in less dust. Any concrete floor must be non-slip; it should have a broom finish, not a steel float finish. Rubber matting can be laid on a concrete floor to prevent mares from slipping. Poor footing at the entrance to a crush will make mares nervous and put them off a swift and safe entry to the crush.

Foals: There should be a safe area, either in front of the crush or to one side, to keep a foal confined close to the mare during scanning. Loose foals are distracting for both the mare and handlers and can lead to accidents. If you also want to use this area to handle foals, do not make it more than one metre wide, and have the walls at least 1200mm high.

