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## Background

- Equine infectious diseases represent a major welfare concern and result in considerable financial losses.
- Biosecurity is highly relevant to the entire equestrian community, yet the extent to which existing guidelines are utilised in the non-racing population is currently unknown.

## Objectives

- To describe the implementation of biosecurity practices and facilities available on a cross-section of non-racing British equestrian premises.
- To identify horse owners' opinions of biosecurity, including factors which act as barriers or motivators to undertaking biosecurity practices.

## Methods

- Postal questionnaires administered to a random sample of non-racing horse owners.
- Information requested:
  - Involvement with horses
  - Equestrian premises
  - Biosecurity practices undertaken
  - Facilities available at the premises
  - Opinions of equine biosecurity
- 708 useable questionnaires returned (65%).

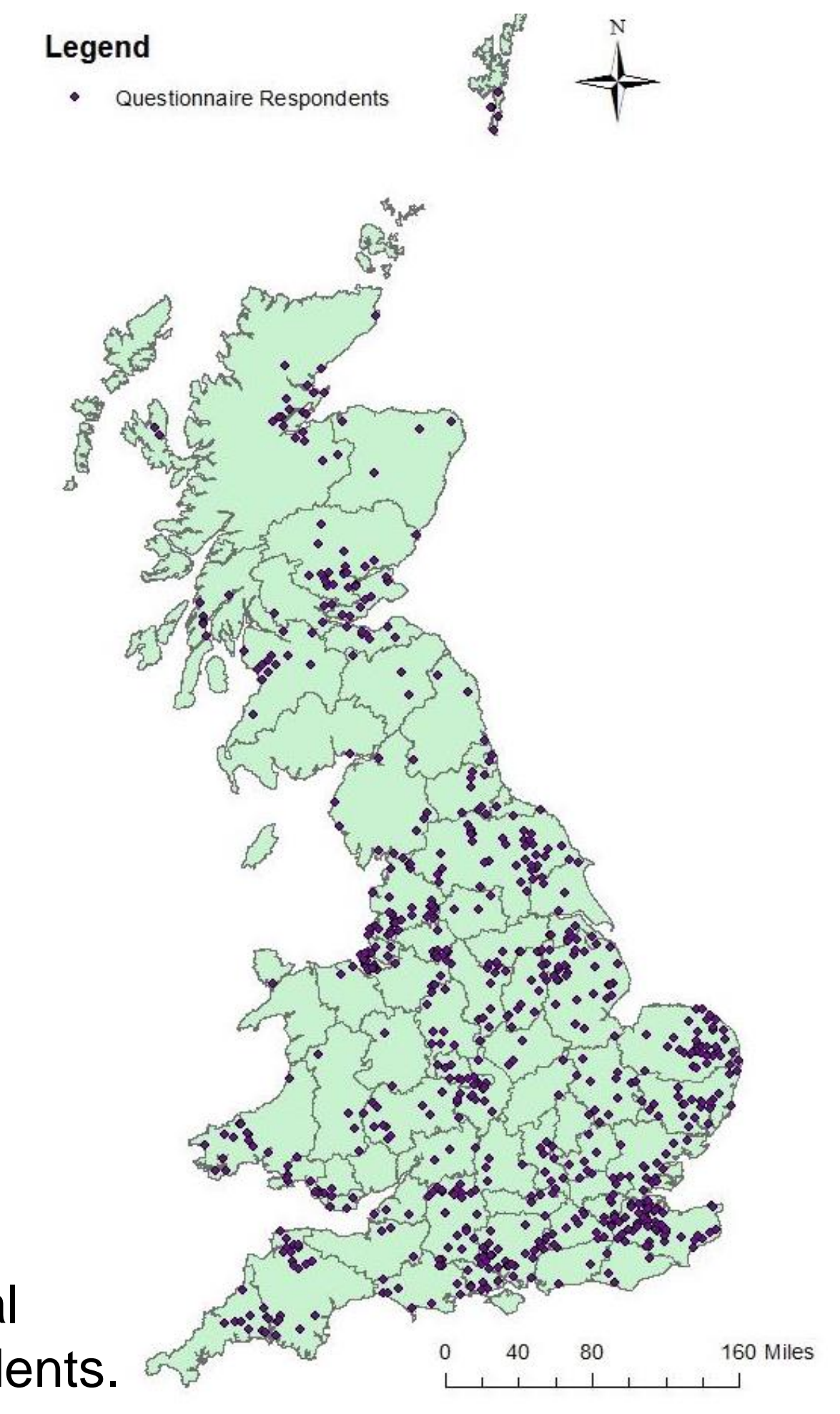


Figure 1: Map showing geographical distribution of questionnaire respondents.

## Results

### Implementation of Biosecurity

- 86% of premises had handwashing facilities
  - a lack of handwashing prior to contact with horses was associated with non-professional owners ( $P=0.007$ ).
- 54% of premises had dedicated isolation facilities.
- 77% of yard managers/owners reported having a protocol for new horses.
- 89% and 94% of respondents vaccinated for influenza and tetanus, respectively.

### Biosecurity Advice

- 36% of respondents were aware of previous biosecurity campaigns
  - only 51% made changes to their practices on the basis of these campaigns.
- 27% had previously discussed biosecurity with their veterinary surgeon.

### Opinions of Biosecurity

- Concern for the health and welfare of their horses was the largest motivator to undertake biosecurity (Fig 2).
- A disease outbreak on the premises was rated as having the greatest influence to change biosecurity practices (Fig 3).
- The implementation of a national biosecurity scheme was considered to have the least influence on biosecurity measures undertaken (Fig 3).
- Although none of the three suggested factors – additional time, lack of facilities and expense – were generally considered to present large barriers, a lack of facilities had the greatest impact.

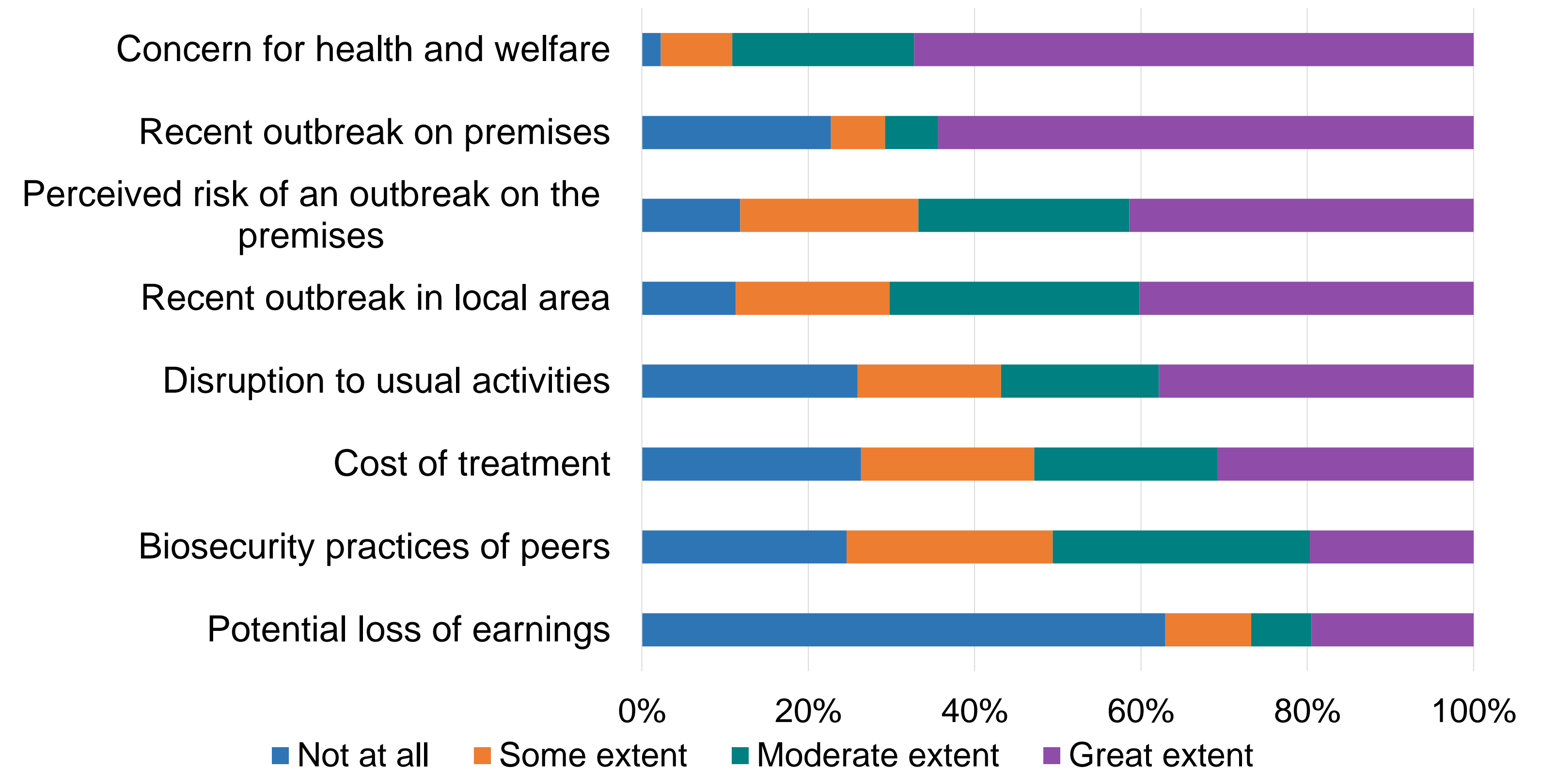


Figure 2: Extent to which suggested factors motivate horse owners to undertake biosecurity measures.

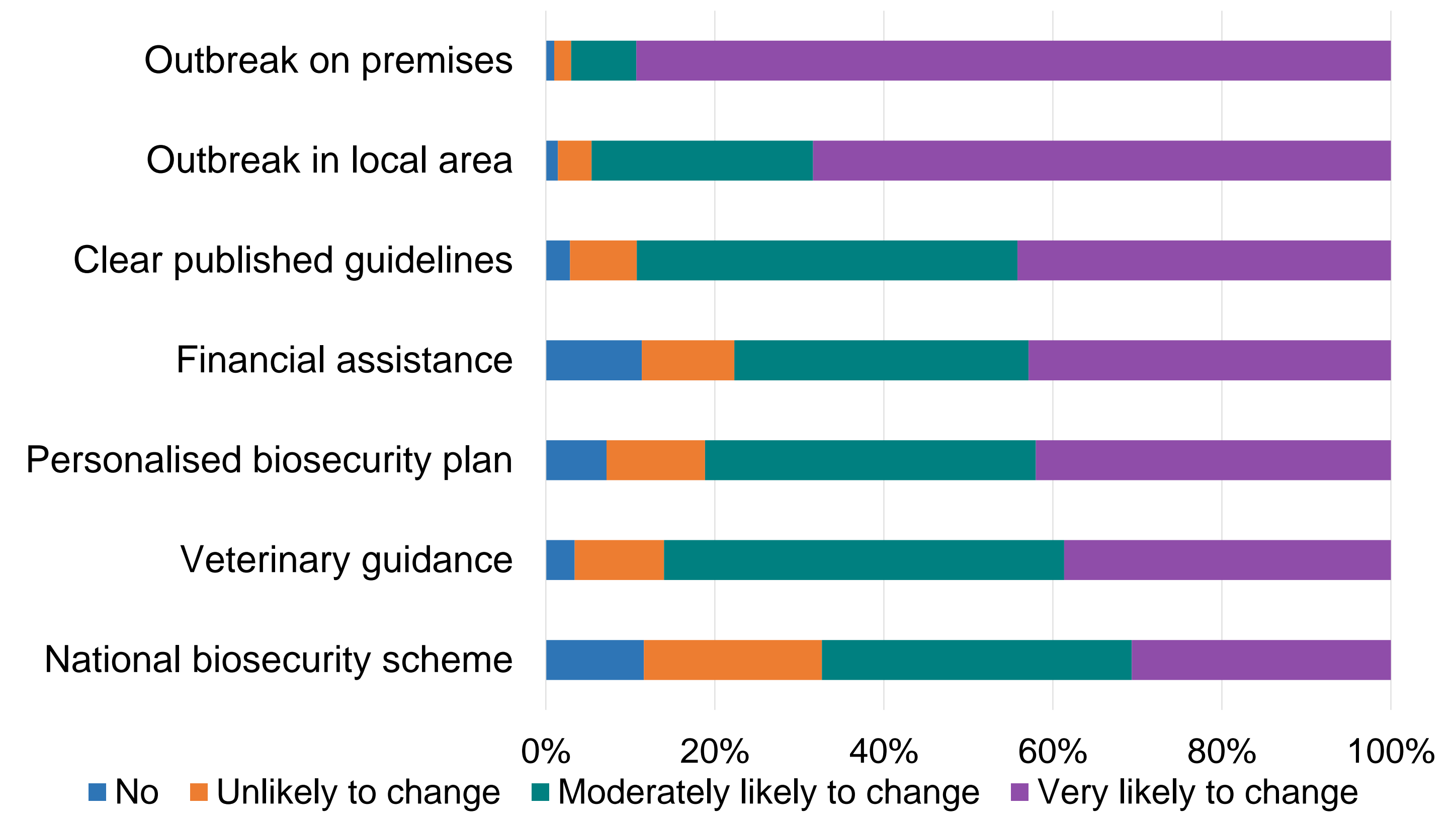


Figure 3: Suggested measures and their potential impact on the implementation of biosecurity practices undertaken by horse owners.

## Discussion

- Implementation of biosecurity practices varies among equestrian premises; some measures are undertaken relatively infrequently.
- Few respondents had actively sought advice regarding biosecurity from their veterinary surgeon, but generally considered that greater veterinary guidance would change their biosecurity practices.
- A disease outbreak on the premises would have the greatest impact to change biosecurity practices, as well as being one of the greatest drivers for current implementation of biosecurity.
- Specific owner and premises factors, as well as motivators and barriers, should be considered in the future provision of biosecurity advice.

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