Equine Herpesvirus

State Veterinarian, Dr. Jim Logan, encourages all horse owners and veterinarians to be aware of the significance of an Equine Herpes Virus One (EHV-1) outbreak in several western states. EHV-1 has been isolated from several horses that attended the National Cutting Horse Association’s Western National Championships event in Ogden, UT April 29 – May 8, 2011.

Equine owners are advised to be vigilant about their animal’s health and to be careful about exposure risks potentially posed by equine events. Veterinarians are reminded that EHV1 is a reportable disease in Wyoming.

What Can Horse Owners Do to Protect Their Horses?

Isolate and monitor their horses for clinical signs of the disease. Individual horse and barn bio-security is very important. Some horses may not show signs of the disease but may still be a carrier.

Horse Movement

Dr. Logan also reminds horse owners to consider this disease risk before transporting horses. Owners are also encouraged to restrict movement of their horses. EVH-1 can transfer from nose-to-nose contact. It can also be spread by contaminated tack, equipment, and people’s clothing. In addition, the virus can be spread through aerosols (airborne) for a limited distance.

Biosecurity and biocontainment control practices can reduce the risk of exposure to this disease. Key points of a biosecurity plan include isolating new animals and those returning to the home premises, supplying clean feed and water, implementing infection-control practices for visitors and personnel and avoiding movement from various locations. Especially important is the isolation of any sick horses and involving your veterinarian at the first sign of abnormal behavior. Any individual horse with clinical signs consistent with neurological EHV-1 infection should be removed immediately from the area and placed in a separate enclosure for isolation. Effective biosecurity practices lead to fewer health problems for animals and contribute to a longer and better-quality life.


General Disease Information

EHV-1 is not transmissible to people; it can be a serious equine disease that can cause respiratory, neurologic disease and death. The most common way for EHV-1 to spread is by direct horse-to-horse contact. The virus can also spread through the air, contaminated equipment, clothing, and hands.
Symptoms of neurologic herpes viral infection include fever, decreased coordination, nasal discharge, urine dribbling, loss of tail tone, hind limb weakness, leaning against a wall or fence to maintain balance, lethargy, and the inability to rise. While there is no cure, the symptoms of the disease may be treatable.

Additional Resources – The following information is also posted on the Colorado Department of Agriculture’s website at www.colorado.gov/ag:

- A Guide To Understanding the Neurologic Form of EHV Infection
- USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service Resources
- American Assoc. of Equine Practitioners Fact Sheet

For further information or questions, please contact Dr. Jim Logan, WY State Veterinarian, (307) 421-1682, Dr. Bob Meyer, WY Assistant State Veterinarian, (307) 256-0952, or Dr. Chris Strang, WLSB Field Veterinarian, (307) 256-4019.