

Equine News

DAIRYLAND VETERINARY SERVICE

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UPDATES ON EQUINE HERPES OUTBREAK

The USDA has declared the outbreak over. We did not find any cases in Wisconsin. Originally, we thought we had two horses that had been exposed at the Utah show, but it turned out that their owners lived in Wisconsin, but kept the horses in Iowa.

Equine Herpes Virus (EHV-1) infection in horses can cause respiratory disease, abortion in mares, neonatal foal death, and /or neurologic disease. The neurologic form of EHV-1 is called Equine Herpes Virus Myeloencephalopathy (EHM). The virus can spread through the air, contaminated equipment, clothing and hands.

2011 Incident Information
 Several horses that competed in the National Cutting Horse Association Western National Championship in Ogden, Utah, on April 29– May 8, 2011, were diagnosed with EHV-1. Following that event reports were received about affected horses from multiple states and Western Canada, with several fatalities. Weekly situation reports were provided by APHIS VS from May 19 through June 23, 2011. A total of 90 confirmed EHV-1 or EHM cases were reported in 10 states (AZ, DA, CO, ID, NM, NV, OK, OR, UT, and WA).

The total confirmed cases and fatalities as of June 22, 2011 are shown in the table below.

	# EHV-1 Confirmed cases	# EHM Confirmed Cases	# Dead or Euthanized Suspect or Confirmed Cases
Primary Expose Horses (at Ogden, UT event)	28	26	10
Secondary & Tertiary Exposed Horses	29	7	3
Total	57	33	13



P O T O M A C F E V E R (P H F)

There were a few cases of Potomac Horse Fever (PHF) in Wisconsin last year . The signs of PHF include anorexia, depression, diarrhea (sometimes severe), fever and laminitis. The disease is caused by an organism called Neorickettsia risticii. The organism goes through some of it's life cycle in flatworms and snails (found in ponds) and flying insects that live close to water (mayflies, dragonflies, caddis flies). If a horse inadvertently eats these insects they can become infected with PHF. It is not transmitted from horse to horse unlike other diarrhea-causing diseases like Salmonella. If left untreated the disease can be fatal. Treatment for the disease is quite successful if caught early. The initial treatment of choice is oxytetracycline IV and supportive care to manage the fluid losses from the diarrhea and to prevent against laminitis.

What you can do to minimize your horse's risks of getting PHF?

1. Vaccination are available and mid summer is the time to do it. The vaccine is most protective 2 weeks to 3 months after it is given. Although not 100% protective, it seems to lower the degree of clinical signs in affected horses.
2. Fence off natural water sources—this will keep the horse away from some of the intermediate hosts that could be ingested.
3. Cover your hay—keep feeding sources covered or indoors and checking for dead insects will also limit exposure to the intermediate hosts.
4. Turn off barn lights at night—flies are attracted to the lights at night and will congregate and may fall into feed/water buckets. A study showed that horses in the end of the barn aisle or close to bright lights were at higher risk of contracting the disease.
5. Be aware of the insect situation in your area. Mayflies, dragonflies, caddis flies and other insects that cause this disease will sometimes hatch in massive quantities, mate and then die leaving carcasses all around. Your local agriculture extension office may have information on controlling these insects.

Other disease that look like PHF include salmonellosis, clostridial diarrhea, toxin exposure. If diarrhea is noted and especially if your horse has a fever or seems depressed then your veterinarians should be contacted immediately.

Summary:

Dr. Matt Schaefer suggests a Potomac Horse Fever vaccination booster along with an Encephalitis booster (consisting of West Nile, Eastern, Western encephalitis) if this has not been given. The encephalitis viruses are transmitted by mosquitos and we know that there is abundant amount of them this year.

For horses traveling and/or showing, be sure to also booster for the respiratory diseases—Rhino/Flu and Strangles.

