

EHV-1 Disease Overview and Outbreak Update

EHV-1 is an acronym for Equine Herpes Virus type 1. Horses that are affected by EHV-1 can have respiratory disease, abortion or neurologic disease. Horses can also become infected with Equine Herpes Virus type 4, which also causes respiratory disease and occasionally abortion. The most common signs of respiratory disease due to EHV are an elevated rectal temperature, coughing, and nasal discharge.

Equine Herpes Virus is spread from aerosol transmission most commonly. This occurs when an affected horse coughs or snorts and aerosolizes droplets which are then inhaled by a nearby stable mate. Therefore, this disease is transmitted during crowding situations such as a horse show. Horses that are sick with EHV shed the virus for at least one week. However, recovered horses have shed the virus longer; therefore once a horse is diagnosed with this disease they should be isolated for 28 days. Environmental transmission plays a minor role in infection because the virus does not last long outside of the body. The virus lasts less than 1 week in a barn environment. Once a horse is infected, they usually do not become ill for about 5 days. There are several different ways to test for EHV. Please contact your veterinarian for assistance if you believe your horse may be infected.

The prognosis for horses that have the neurologic form of EHV depends of the severity of clinical signs and if they have become recumbent. There is no specific treatment for EHV but supportive care can help horses that are affected. To date, there is no vaccine that has a label claim for protection against the neurologic form of EHV-1.

If you suspect that your horse may have contracted EHV, please contact your veterinarian for diagnosis and appropriate treatment. Separate the horse from the rest of the herd to a place that is physically distant. Use different supplies

(wheelbarrow, pitchfork, water buckets) and wear coveralls when handling the sick horse. To minimize transmission to other horses, instruct barn workers to attend to the sick horse at the end of their shift. Stable help should wear gloves when handling the horse and wash hands thoroughly with soap and water when they exit the stall. Take the temperatures of all horses on the property twice daily. If any animal has a rectal temperature of greater than 102 degrees Fahrenheit, isolate them and call your veterinarian. Healthy animals that have been previously vaccinated for EHV should have their vaccine boosted. Horses that have never been vaccinated will not have time to undergo an effective vaccination series before the risk period if they are exposed to a horse with EHV. Horses should be vaccinated and boosted now so that if they become exposed, they may be protected.

Overall, the risk of horses in Florida contracting EHV-1 myeloencephalitis is low. However, it is important to know the signs of illness to quickly identify and halt an outbreak if one should occur. Additional information about EHV can be found at www.aaep.org and further updates on the EHV-1 outbreak can be found at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/nahss/equine/ehv/>.

Contact Brandon Equine Medical Center at 813-643-7177 or email info@brandonequine.com with any questions regarding this topic.

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