

What is EHV-1? Equine Herpes Virus Type 1 causes respiratory disease, abortions and neurological disease. This is not a new virus, however in recent years the neurologic form of the disease (which is often fatal) has become more common, with numerous outbreaks around the U.S. All horses have the potential to be carriers of the virus whether or not they demonstrate clinical signs. Stress may trigger the onset of neurologic symptoms caused by the virus attacking the spinal cord and brain stem. Most horses experience respiratory signs for one or two weeks prior to the development of neurologic signs. Many infected horses never develop neurologic disease and the only clinical sign may be a fever or a cough.

How is EHV transmitted? Transmission occurs via the respiratory route with infective droplets spread by coughing and snorting horses. Horses shedding the virus will run a fever (>102°F) and the virus can be shed in nasal secretions for up to 14 days. In addition to direct contact between horses, contaminated hands and equipment can spread the virus. Without disinfection the virus can survive in the environment several weeks.

How do we prevent the disease? There is no vaccination currently available that is labeled to protect against the neurological form of herpesvirus. There is preliminary research that suggests the modified-live virus vaccine may minimize clinical signs, but has currently not yet been confirmed. However, this vaccine has been shown to limit viral shedding. Therefore the only way to prevent infection is to practice the essential biosecurity measures which we have outlined below.

On & Around the Farm:

- If borrowing equipment from other farms thoroughly wash and disinfect before using (this applies to tack, blankets, stable supplies and even tractors, trailers, and other farm equipment);
- Work with your veterinarian to develop and administer a herd health protocol that includes at least regular Coggins testing, core vaccinations and deworming strategy;
- When possible keep horses that travel frequently separated from broodmares, youngsters, and other horses that do not regularly leave your farm.

At Shows, Trail Rides, and Other Equestrian Events:

- Use only your own equipment. Avoid sharing halters, lead ropes, wheelbarrows, muck forks, tack, etc.;
- Feed and water your horse using only your buckets and tubs, and do not allow other horses to eat or drink from your water tubs, hay feeders, etc.;
- If possible, stable with at least one empty stall between your horses and other horses;

- Disinfect any equipment that is shared or comes into contact with another horse; and
- Talk to your veterinarian about a vaccination protocol to best suit your horse's disease exposure risk.

New Horses:

- Require all horses to be presented with a current negative Coggins test prior to entering your facility;
- Isolate (quarantine) new animals for 2-6 weeks before introducing them to the herd. Isolation facilities should at a minimum disallow any physical contact between horses and should limit/eliminate the ability of horses to pass bodily fluids including saliva and nasal discharge;
- Only handle new/isolated horses after handling all other animals on your property;
- Before integrating new horses to your herd administer all necessary vaccinations and other preventive health care measures as recommended by your veterinarian and in accordance with your preventive herd health protocol.

Managing Sick Horses:

- Work with your veterinarian to develop an appropriate treatment and quarantine protocol;
- Separate the sick animal from the rest of the herd; Tend to the sick animal last, after tending to your healthy animals;
- Thoroughly and carefully wash your hands both before and after treatment. A full shower may be necessary (after treatment) depending upon the ailment;
- Walk through a disinfecting foot bath before entering and exiting the treatment area;
- Stabling area and tools and equipment used in or around the affected horse should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected prior to other use.

When disease outbreaks do occur, rumors and wild stories spread like wildfire via media reports, e-mail, internet chat rooms and social media groups like Facebook and Twitter. Make sure that the information you use to make decisions about the safety of your farm is from credible sources. The best information is available from veterinary organizations such as the AAEP (American Association of Equine Practitioners) or AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association); the USDA (the U.S. Department of Agriculture is the government agency in charge of monitoring and overseeing disease outbreaks); and your local veterinarian (we receive regular reports on disease outbreaks from the above agencies and the Illinois State Veterinarian). Please contact our office if you have questions about biosecurity on your farm!