

# 2013 Occurrences of Equine Herpes Virus Type-1

Kentucky's Perspective and Position Updated: March 7, 2013

Equine Herpes Virus Type 1 (EHV-1) is described to be a highly contagious pathogen that is ubiquitous in horse populations throughout the world. Infections in horses can result in a variety of ailments that include respiratory disease, abortions, neonatal deaths and the neurologic disease termed Equine Herpes Myeloencephalopathy (EHM). Recently, alerts of Equine Herpes Myeloencephalopathy being diagnosed in multiple states have been issued. States having cases of EHM diagnosed in recent months include California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, Tennessee and Utah. Horses of different breeds and representing vastly different disciplines and activity have been affected.

The apparent increased frequency of disease and severity of symptoms being seen has lead Kentucky State Veterinarian Robert Stout to conclude extra precaution needs to be initiated and implemented to help mitigate the associated risk. We are directing Kentucky facility managers and the managers of shows/exhibitions planned to be held in Kentucky to immediately review their biosecurity practices and if needed elevate their biosecurity plan to minimize opportunity of horses having direct or indirect contact with one another. Indirect contact would include common water and feed sources as well as shared equipment and common areas. The goal of a biosecurity plan is to prevent the transmission of infectious agents among individuals. The components of a successful program will include cooperation of management, facility layout, decontamination, and when applicable immunization. Each of these factors directly affects the success or failure of the program. A copy of the American Association of Equine Practitioners biosecurity guidelines and EHV resources can be found at [www.aaep.org/ehv\\_resources.htm](http://www.aaep.org/ehv_resources.htm). Our office is happy to assist facilities, show management and event veterinarians in evaluating their individual plans and when a need is identified, assist in adapting the plans.

As an additional preventive measure, we encourage horsemen to consult their veterinarians and after evaluating their animal's vaccination status consider if there is need or benefit to stimulating an immune response by vaccinating against EHV-1. We acknowledge the available vaccines' labels make no claim to prevent neurologic disease; but based on our experience managing outbreaks of this disease, and in consultation with infectious disease experts and research scientist, we continue to be of the opinion the vaccine does have a meaningful level of efficacy and may aide in reducing the impact of a disease incident.

In response to the identified increased risk, we have and will continue to operate with elevated regulatory surveillance and equine health inspection activity at events in Kentucky. Exhibitors can expedite their passage through our inspection points by having their health documents organized and horses loaded in a manner that will allow visual inspection. In addition to the surveillance and inspection activity we will be working closely with show managers and veterinarians to insure immediate notification and quick response to any suspected communicable disease.