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Equine Herpes Virus: A Recent Outbreak

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In the spring of 2018, there have been two cases of EHV in North Dakota, in which both cases resulted in the death of two horses. EHV is one of nine different types of herpes that have been identified in horses. There are two different types of easily recognizable symptoms of EHV, one being respiratory and the other neurological.

When Equine Herpes Virus affects the horse in respiratory-related ways, the symptoms are quite distinct, and are similar to those of the common cold in humans. Horses may experience nasal and eye discharge, and short-lived fevers. In some cases, the horse may not physically be able to stand anymore, which can lead to depression. Though the virus generally survives up to seven days in the environment, horses who are effected respiratorily are most likely to survive. The death rate in these cases is around 1%, if not less.

The neurologic side of Equine Herpes Virus, like the respiratory side, also has very easily visible symptoms. Symptoms include: wobbliness, trouble walking, and behavior changes. Horses who are affected neurologically may tilt their head, and may no longer physically be able to stand. Though there are a couple similarities between respiratory and neurological EHV, the neurological side is a lot more serious, as the death rate is about 50%.

Mikayla Wolfe

Tioga FFA Chapter

Carrie Hammer, an Associate Professor in Animal Sciences recently gave her

at North Dakota State University

input on the issue. "Equine Herpes Virus is very common," Hammer stated. "Many events have been

cancelled because of it, and many events are still in question. If there has been a case, or even a suspect in the area, cancelling would be best in order to keep horses safe."

There are many ways to prevent the spread of Equine Herpes Virus. One of the best ways is to vaccinate your animal. You can vaccinate for the disease alone, or you may combine it with other common vaccinations. Another way of biosecurity would be to use only *your own* tack and equipment, as EHV is airborne and very contagious. If you are concerned that your horse may catch the virus, stay safe around horses at other events and be aware of everything going on around you. If your animal does contract EHV, keep them isolated ^{50 feet} 50 feet away from other horses for twenty-one days. Take their rectal temperature twice per day, and make sure to disinfect your barn, transport vehicle, and other tools you may use.

There are still some suspect cases in North Dakota. If you are concerned that your animal may contract the virus, stay safe and stay away, even with just suspects. The risk of disease spread is increased with congregation. If you have any questions you can contact your local veterinarian, county extension agent, or state veterinary offices.

Good Science