

Horses Take a Hit from Equine Herpes Virus

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The Equine Herpes Virus, or EHV, is a highly contagious viral equine disease. There are nine known strands of the disease, but EHV-1 is the most common in North Dakota. This disease is not new, but this spring has been particularly bad. In just two months, two horses have been confirmed to have died from this disease. There have been other suspected equine deaths across the state. Dr. Carrie Hammer, Associate Professor of Equine Science at North Dakota State University, gave an inside look at the affects and prevention of this deadly virus. There is a variety of symptoms that show in a horse depending on what infection they get from the virus. Hammer said that the respiratory infection of EHV-1 is similar to the common cold; it includes symptoms such as a runny nose, cough, and fever. While all varieties of the virus have the potential to be fatal, the respiratory side of the disease has less than a 1% mortality rate. The deadlier, but rarer side of the virus attacks the nervous system. The spinal cord is greatly affected and can cause a head tilt, wobbliness, and behavior changes. Hammer expressed that many horses experience large behavior changes and may get depressed or stop eating.

When EHV is suspected to be in a given area, Hammer encourages that high protective measures should be taken. Hammer said that the virus spreads quickly and rapidly once you have a horse infected. It can spread through several sources. It can be through air born droplets, coughs from close infected horses, and contaminated objects such as tack, feed, clothes, and water buckets. With a disease that spreads so quickly, preventative measures are highly

~~recommended.~~ Horses who may have the virus need to be quarantined for no less than 21 days. ~~with a distance of~~ at least 50-feet ~~between~~ horses. Rectal temperature should be taken twice daily because a temperature is a good indicator of the virus, and may only be around for a short time.

To prevent further spread of the virus, barns, trailers, and other equipment should be cleaned

They should stay

away from other

using. While the disease is deadly, the pathogen itself can be killed by using bleach or other home cleaners. One of the best preventative measures an owner can take is ^{vaccination.} ~~vaccinate their~~ horses. There are several ~~types and~~ brands of vaccinations ~~that are~~ done yearly to prevent EHV. If an owner knows they are going to an event, they should vaccinate at least two weeks before they depart to allow time for the vaccine to work.

In North Dakota, many events, including horse shows, trail rides, and rodeos, have already been canceled. Many are scared of the virus and do not want to risk their horse getting EHV.

However, the horse riding world does not stop due to EHV. When going to an event, it is best to not share tack. Sharing tack creates a direct path of contamination. Hosts of an event have special circumstances to consider when deciding to continue as planned or cancel the event. ~~Hammer~~

~~greatly expressed,~~ ^{Hammer said,} "If you have cases in your county it is safest to not have your event." This is also true if you know of people who will be traveling from a county with suspected EHV cases.

If you suspect EHV, it is best to contact your local equine veterinarian to assess the situation. ~~Dr.~~

Hammer is also available to answer questions and can be contacted through ^{at} ~~e-mail~~

~~(carrie.hammer@nds.u.edu)~~ or phone ~~(701-231-5682)~~.