

Dangerous Equine Virus Outbreak Threatens North Dakota

In the early spring of this year, a horse in Bowman County, ND, was diagnosed with a disease known as EHV-1, also known as Equine Herpes Virus, and had to be euthanized. A few ~~short~~ weeks later, a horse in Stutsman County received the same diagnosis and also had to be euthanized. Since then, North Dakota has recognized an outbreak of the disease across the state.

Carrie Hammer, Associate Professor of Animal Science at NDSU, released more information on the virus in a ~~press~~ ^{news} conference. Hammer ^{spell out} ~~commented~~ ^{said} that EHV-1 is a highly contagious viral equine disease that may result in respiratory and neurologic infection, abortion in mares, and death. She ^{said} ~~states~~ that there are at least nine strands of EHV known; however, EHV-1 is the most contagious, which is the strand that ^{spell out} ~~ND~~ has been struggling to prevent this year.

Due to the outbreak of the virus, many events, such as horse shows and rodeos, across the state have been cancelled, ^{to be careful} ~~since~~ the virus is so highly contagious. EHV-1 spreads rapidly through airborne droplets or tack that has been contaminated. The virus typically lives up to seven days, but may live up to a month in perfect environmental conditions, which is why it is important not to share tack or equipment between horses. Even if your tack has been exposed to the virus, it should be disinfected. This disease is difficult to fight, therefore, you do not want to risk your horses contracting it.

Hammer ^{recommended} ~~recommends~~ taking preventative measures to reduce the risk of the virus spreading, biosecurity, such as giving horses annual vaccinations and not sharing tack or equipment. If a horse is suspected to carry the EHV-1 disease, vaccinations should be given two

Dixie Posey

Harvey FFA

weeks prior to any public events the horse is expected to attend. However, Hammer ^{stated} ~~states~~ that it would be safer to keep the horse from the event, to lower the risk of spreading the virus. Should you suspect that your horse has potentially been exposed to EHV-1, you should keep it isolated for 21 days, take its rectal temperature twice a day, and disinfect your barn, trailers, and diagnostic tools. A diluted form of bleach can easily kill the virus and should be used in disinfecting. This is a very dangerous disease and you do not want to risk exposing your horse to it or spreading it to other horses. In this case, it is better to be safe than sorry.

If a horse has been infected with EHV, it may show symptoms that reflect where the virus is attacking. If the horse displays nasal or eye discharge, fever, or depression, the virus is likely affecting its respiratory system. If a horse exhibits staggering, stumbling, head tilting, behavioral changes, or is unable to stand on its own, the virus is attacking its neurological system. Either way, the horse should be examined by a veterinarian and vaccinated.

High mortality is not very common when EHV-1 is concerned. However, it does cause sickness in horses and it is imperative that we prevent the spread of the disease. "Equine Herpes Virus is very common and is present in our horse populations at all times. This is not new,"

^{said} ~~states~~ Hammer ^{asked} ~~prompted~~ When ^{answered} ~~answers~~ who to call if someone has any questions, Hammer ^{answered} ~~answers~~ "Their area veterinarian is a great contact if they have any questions."

For more information regarding Equine Herpes Virus, email ~~Carrie~~ Hammer at carrie.hammer@ndsu.edu, call at 701-231-5682, or send a letter to Hulz 100F, NDSU Dept 7620, or PO Box 6050 Fargo, ND 58108-6050.