

West Virginia Department of Agriculture

Walt Helmick, Commissioner



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WVDA WARNS AGAINST MOVING HORSES IN JACKSON COUNTY AREA

Charleston, W.Va. – The West Virginia Department of Agriculture is advising horse owners in Jackson and adjoining counties that they might want to avoid moving their horses following what appears to be an outbreak of equine influenza virus (EIV).

“This is not an emergency situation. Horses may get sick, but we expect them to make full recoveries within two or three weeks,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Walt Helmick. “However, we are seeing multiple reports of symptomatic horses and EIV and we wanted to make the public aware.”

Acting State Veterinarian Vanessa Harper said she has been told that testing has confirmed one horse with EIV.

“Equine influenza is a very contagious disease, so similar symptoms in other horses point to the same illness,” said Dr. Harper.

Those symptoms include fever, malaise and respiratory symptoms, such as nasal discharge. She also noted that horses under the age of five are more susceptible to the virus than older ones, and that vaccines are available that can help lessen the severity of an infection. Horse owners should consult their regular veterinarian about vaccines, she said.

The likely source of this disease was a horse show held around the first of the month in Jackson County. The facility where the show took place has been decontaminated since then.

Horse events have been cancelled for the time being in Jackson County, according to the WVU Extension office there. The Extension Service is also encouraging horse owners to keep their horses on the farm and to step up biosecurity practices until the outbreak runs its course.

Dr. Harper added that this outbreak is a perfect example of why organizers of animal shows should keep good records on all the animals that take part in shows.

“A list allows owners to be notified that their livestock may have been exposed to a disease. That way they can take the appropriate steps to care for their animals,” Dr. Harper said.

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