

West Virginia Department of Agriculture

Kent A. Leonhardt, Commissioner

Amie Minor-Richard, Deputy Commissioner



11/20/2025

RE: Multi-state Outbreak of Equine Herpes Virus

Attention: West Virginia licensed veterinarians, equine industry professionals, and event organizers

What We Know:

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) has been made aware of a multi-state outbreak of Equine Herpes Myeloencephalopathy (EHM) caused by a virulent neurotropic Equine Herpes Virus-1 (EHV-1). The outbreak is associated with several barrel racing and rodeo events in Texas and Oklahoma. The WVDA Animal Health Division is working with other states to investigate traces from these events that have returned to West Virginia.

What This Means:

Depending on how many horses were viremic and actively shedding virus at the event and therefore contagious, will impact how many horses have since dispersed and returned to their origin states post-event, and may now be becoming clinically neurological. It behooves everyone who owns, operates or manages a boarding or training facility in which clientele horses participate in organized competitive events whether local, regional or with national exposure to take precautions and have a general biosecurity plan for dealing with signs of EHM.

Clinical Signs:

- Fever of Unknown Origin (FOU)
- Nasal discharge or coughing
- Lethargy
- Neurological signs, including stumbling or incoordination, loss of tail tone, hind-limb weakness, head tilt, recumbency, and urine dribbling
- Other signs compatible with EHV-1/EHM

Actions Horse Owners Should Take:

Horses returning from organized events should be staged in a "quarantine area" at least for a few days following return so that rectal temperatures taken twice daily can be logged and monitored for any evidence of a fever ($T > 101.3$ F especially at this time of year when ambient temperatures aren't nearly as extreme). Horses that are in the

general population that develop a FUO should be moved to a quarantine area as soon as possible once a fever is detected to protect the rest of the barn population.

This includes separate equipment to feed, muck stalls, PPE including coveralls, boots, a disinfection station, and designated personnel if feasible. Ideally this quarantine area would be at least 120 feet away from the nearest horse and downwind of any prevailing breeze. **Contact your veterinarian and the State Veterinarians office** if a horse develops FUO or other signs consistent with EHM.

Actions Venue Owners Should Take:

For venue owners and managers, it is highly recommended that the contracted veterinarians they employ to provide coverage for equine emergencies also be highly involved in the planning and execution of biosecurity strategies for these organized events. These may include such basic strategies as requiring a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection issued by a Category II Accredited Veterinarian with documentation of up-to-date vaccination status on the CVI regardless of whether the movement of that animal to that show is traveling interstate or intrastate. Please keep in mind the West Virginia Department of Agriculture is responsible for enforcing interstate animal movement requirements and other disease control measures. Venue owners and managers have all the power in which to implement strict entry requirements to their show grounds as they see fit. Typically, the Department does NOT get involved in setting entry requirements to equine events though we will implement quarantine authority or prohibit movement to events if the disease risk is deemed too great. The Department is more than willing to collaborate and advise venue operators on best practices.

Resources and Reporting:

Horse owners are encouraged to visit the Equine Disease Communications Center for up-to-date information on this outbreak, as well as information to protect your horses. EHM is a reportable disease in West Virginia, and any suspect cases must be reported to the Department of Agriculture at 304-558-2214.

Sincerely,



Erika Alt, DVM
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West Virginia Department of Agriculture