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ANIMAL HEALTH ADVISORY Handling Equine Herpes Virus Cases and Suspects (31 January 2024)

This year is proving to be another active one for equine herpes virus cases across the United States. Indiana is no exception.

Equine herpes virus (EHV-1) has been diagnosed at a private horse facility in LaGrange County, Ind. All horses on the site have been quarantined until Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH) requirements are completed. Owners of horses traced to the facility are being notified to isolate and monitor their horses.

Reporting and Response

As a reminder: **EHV-1 diagnosed in a horse with neurologic signs is referred to as EHM** (equine herpesvirus myeloencephalopathy), which is **reportable to the Indiana State Board of Animal Health**. (<https://www.in.gov/boah/boah-rules/compliance-issues/reportable-disease-list/>)

When a veterinarian receives a positive laboratory result for EHV-1 on a horse showing neurologic signs, he or she will contact BOAH. The BOAH district veterinarian will help manage the situation to lessen spread of the disease.

Exercise Caution

BOAH's goal is to avoid the widespread cases of EHV-1/EHM that we have seen around the country in recent years. **An important step is for horse owners to respect a self-imposed quarantine on clinical horses until the laboratory test results are returned, and comply with BOAH restrictions if an official quarantine must be imposed.** Restricting movement and contact with others can greatly deter spread of this disease.

About EHV

EHV-1 is common in the horse population and most often clinically manifests as just a mild respiratory illness, especially in young horses, known commonly as equine rhinopneumonitis or "rhino". Less commonly EHV-1 manifests itself as a neurologic form known as EHM. In very rare cases EHM may be caused by EHV-4. Potential signs of EHV-1 include: decreased coordination, urine dribbling, loss of tail tone, **fever, hind limb weakness**, leaning against things to maintain balance, **lethargy**, and the inability to get off the ground.

Prevention

Good biosecurity when traveling and interacting with other horses at equine events and boarding facilities is very important. Tack, people's hands, clothing, water buckets and other equipment can spread the virus between animals, so regular cleaning and disinfection are necessary, in addition to avoiding sharing. As always, vaccination is important to keeping horses healthy and supporting good immunity.

More information is available on the BOAH website: <https://www.in.gov/boah/species-information/equinehorses/>.

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