



Equine Herpes Virus

TIPS FOR HORSE OWNERS

Equine Herpes Virus, or EHV, is a family of viruses named by numbers such as EHV-1, EHV-2 and so forth. These viruses are common worldwide, and most horses have been exposed to them by the time they are two years old without serious side effects. EHV-1 is associated with a wide variety of health risks, including abortion, respiratory infection, disease in newborn foals and, rarely, neurologic disease. It is unknown why some horses develop serious neurologic disease after infection with EHV-1.

Equine Herpes Myeloencephalopathy, or EHM, is the name associated with the neurologic disease associated with equine herpes virus infections. Neurologic signs can include decreased coordination, urine dribbling, hind limb weakness, lethargy and inability to rise. These horses may lean against a wall or fence for balance.

There currently is no vaccine for the prevention of this devastating neurologic form of equine herpes virus. There are vaccines available to reduce the risks of abortion and respiratory disease associated with EHV-1 infection.

What methods of prevention can I implement to avoid EHM and other disease transmission?



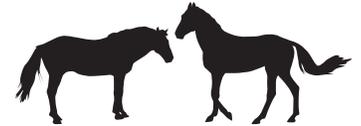
Try to reduce the stress placed on your horse.

Horse shows themselves can be stressful, but you can minimize it by not overworking your horse, keeping it comfortable, well fed and always hydrated. Don't ask for more from your horse than you have practiced at home.



Do not share equipment.

EHV-1 can be spread via indirect contact. Do not share equipment or tack. If using the same hose to water different stalls of horses, do not submerge the hose in the water (hold the nozzle above the water). Do not allow your horse to drink out of shared water tanks.



Do not let your horse "visit" with another horse.

If at all possible, place tack stalls between horses of different origins or leave an empty space between horses. Do not go down the show barn aisle petting horse after horse, and wash your hands after interacting with a "new" horse.



Monitor your horse for illness.

The earliest sign of EHV-1 is an increase in your horse's temperature. Check your horse's temperature twice daily if it has been exposed to a new horse or is traveling. Do not take your horse's temperature after work or exercise as it will have increased due to activity. Report to show veterinarian or show office if your horse is sick.



Do not bring a sick horse to the horse show.

We all know how important shows are, but there will always be another one. If your horse has shown any signs of illness, do the right thing and stay home. We will miss you, but we want to do the right thing for the health of all the horses.



Optimize your horse's health.

That includes keeping a horse up to date on all of its vaccines, including EHV-1. Don't forget that proper nutrition, conditioning and parasite management also will keep your horse's immune system in top shape.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Dr. Kris Hiney, Assistant Professor
Department of Animal Science • Oklahoma State University
405-744-9291 • khiney@okstate.edu • ansi.okstate.edu