This information is a professional communication for the equine industry. The OAHN group is a dedicated group of veterinarians from primary care practices, academia, government and laboratories, who meet regularly to discuss equine disease and health issues. It is the intent of this program to monitor and protect the health of horses in Ontario.

Ontario Animal Health Network (OAHN)
Equine Expert Network
Quarterly Owner Report – July to September 2017

July—September 2017
Report #9

**Highlights**

**Key Points**

Antimicrobial use and resistance—change is coming

Looking Ahead—Pneumonia and pleuropneumonia

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**Ontario Equine Disease Surveillance (July to September) - Key points**

- An increased number of horses were diagnosed with West Nile Virus and Potomac Horse Fever in Q3. Please go here for the location of West Nile virus affected horses in Ontario.
- Fever of unknown origin, non-itchy skin diseases and equine asthma were also reported with greater frequency and were likely due to the wet, warm weather during the quarter.
- There was also an unusual increase in atrial fibrillation and high post-race heart rates with rhythm abnormalities noted in some Thoroughbred racehorses.
- Rabies continues to occur in Ontario. Please go here for further information. To date, no horses in Ontario have died due to the rabies virus.

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**Antimicrobial Use and Resistance – Change is Coming**

**Pending Federal Changes to Address Antimicrobial Resistance**

Increasing antimicrobial resistance is a global concern and its effects on human and animal health have been raised by experts at local, national and international levels.

The Government of Canada is working to help control antimicrobial resistance and promote improved antimicrobial stewardship in both humans and animals. Health Canada has announced how it is taking action to help reduce the use of antimicrobials in animals and enhance veterinary oversight:

By December 2018, growth promotion claims will no longer be allowed on the labels of veterinary products containing antimicrobials that are important to human medicine.

By December 2018, a veterinary prescription will be required for the purchase of antimicrobials that are important to human medicine. This means that Ontario producers will no longer be able to purchase such products at Livestock Medicines Outlets. Producers will need a veterinary prescription to purchase these products through a veterinarian or pharmacist which means they will need to have a valid veterinary client patient relationship.

Antimicrobials in mixed feed will still be available at feed mills and will also require a prescription. Producers should discuss delivery options with their veterinarian if there are concerns about geographical distance to a veterinary office or obtaining products for timely treatment.

Products containing the following active ingredients will require a prescription (subject to change):

- Apramycin
- Bacitracin
- Erythromycin
- Sulphonamides
- Tetracycline/Clortetracycline/Oxytetracycline
- Tilmicosin

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**Your OAHN Equine Network Team:**

**Practitioners**
Dr. Drew Hunnisett (Network Co-Lead)
Dr. Chris Grossenbacher
Dr. Melissa McKee
Dr. Jessica Peatling

**Animal Health Lab**
Dr. Murray Hazlett

**Ontario Vet College**
Dr. L. Memo Arroyo

**OMAFRA**
Dr. Alison Moore (Network Co-Lead)
Dr. Cathy Furness
Dr. Tim Pasma

**Network coordinator**
Dr. Melanie Barham
Recent OAHN podcasts:

• **Special Horseman / Horsewoman series: Debunking Myths about Strangles - Part 1 with Dr. Memo Arroyo**
• **Special Horseman / Horsewoman series: Debunking Myths about Strangles - Part 2 with Dr. Chris Grossenbacher**
• **Special Horseman / Horsewoman series: Debunking Myths about Strangles - Part 3 with Dr. Melissa McKee**
• **Equine Proliferative Enteropathy (Lawsonia) Part 1 and 2 with Dr. Nathan Slovis**
• **Equine Proliferative Enteropathy in Ontario with Dr. Memo Arroyo**

Available [here](#) 

Lincomycin
Neomycin
Penicillin G
Spectinomycin
Streptomycin/Dihydrostreptomycin

Tiamulin
Tylosin/Tylyalosin
Virginiamycin
Salts/derivatives of any of the listed products

Ionophore products and coccidiostats will NOT be affected by this change.

Since November 2017, approvals and access to low-risk veterinary health products such as “nutraceuticals” have been improved to give producers/owners greater access to a broader range of products for animal health.

In November 2017, importation of antimicrobials important to human medicine for producers'/owners’ own use was no longer permitted. National producer organizations were consulted on products to be exempted, but no products containing antimicrobials were eligible for exemption.

By May 2018, only those with a Canadian Food Inspection Agency Drug Establishment License (DEL) will be able to import active pharmaceutical ingredients. Producers/owners will otherwise no longer be able to import these ingredients to mix on farm.

Beginning with the 2018 sales year, reporting of veterinary antimicrobial sales will be mandatory for manufacturers, importers and compounders of veterinary antimicrobials.

For more information about changes to federal policy and the regulations related to antimicrobial use and resistance, please visit: [Government of Canada’s response to antimicrobial resistance](#).

To review OMAFRA’s evolving approach to complement federal changes to address antimicrobial resistance, please visit: [Antimicrobial Resistance in Agriculture](#).

Looking Ahead - **“Shipping Fever” in Horses**

It’s that time of year again when Ontario “Snowbirds” head south for the winter with their horses for training and competition. Horses may be on the trailer for an average of 14-24 hours depending on the final destination. Long haul transport has been identified as a risk factor for the development of pneumonia and pleuropneumonia in horses, also called “shipping fever”.

Pneumonia means inflammation in the lung caused by infection with an organism such as a bacterium or virus. Pleuropneumonia is a combination of pleuritis (fluid in the chest cavity due to inflammation of the lining of the lung and chest wall) and pneumonia.

There are many risk factors associated with the development of pneumonia and pleuropneumonia. The stress of transport weakens the horse’s immune response to certain bacteria and viruses predisposing it to infection. Tying the horse’s head in an elevated position has been shown to impair its ability to clear debris such as hay and dust as well as normal respiratory bacteria from its airway increasing the potential for infection in the lung. As well, the comingling of horses with different health statuses, such as yearlings recently bought from sales barns, can lead to the spread of respiratory viruses such as influenza, equine herpesvirus 1 and 4 and rhinitis virus. These viruses further impair the immune system creating a prime environment in the lung for the development of pneumonia.

Since transport can have a negative effect on health, it is important to closely monitor the horse after it arrives at the destination. Twice daily temperature checks should be performed for the
There are some things one can do to reduce the likelihood of pneumonia/pleuropneumonia developing. Ensure your horse is as healthy as possible, and especially well hydrated, prior to transport. Vaccinations for respiratory diseases should be up-to-date. Your veterinarian may also provide a product to support the immune system (called an immunomodulator) closer to the time of travel. Ship horses in box stalls when possible so their heads can be down. If it’s standing room only, consider not providing access to hay in the trailer to limit the inhalation of dust etc. if the trip is shorter than 12 hours. Providing hay without access to water during long transport times will only serve to dehydrate and further compromise your horse so if hay is fed, offer water frequently.