

June 5, 2020

**A case of equine herpes myeloencephalopathy in a horse in
Durham County**

On June 3, 2020, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) was notified of a confirmed case of equine herpes myeloencephalopathy (EHM) due to equine herpes virus-1 (EHV-1) at a boarding facility in Durham County. The 18 year-old, quarter horse-cross gelding was examined by the attending veterinarian for urinary incontinence. Results of laboratory testing confirmed the presence of EHV-1. The horse is being isolated and treated at an equine referral hospital. The farm manager along with the attending veterinarian have restricted movement for horses and people on and off the property and instituted strict biosecurity procedures including twice daily temperature recordings for all horses on the property.

There is no link between this facility and the racetrack in the City of Toronto and the farm in Dufferin County for which previous advisories were issued.

EHV-1 does not pose a threat to public health or food safety.

EHV-1 infection is immediately notifiable by laboratories to OMAFRA under the Animal Health Act. Attending veterinarians concerned about potential cases of EHV-1 infection may contact an OMAFRA veterinarian through the Agricultural Information Contact Centre at 1-877-424-1300.

Because a fever (greater than 101.5 °F or 38.6 °C) may be the first indication of infection, the temperature of potentially exposed animals should be monitored and recorded twice daily for 21 days and any abnormalities discussed with a veterinarian. In certain situations, this time frame can be reduced to 14 days if associated with testing to ensure horses are no longer shedding the virus. Neurological signs, if they develop, may include loss of balance, hind-limb weakness, difficulty urinating, decreased tail tone, depression and being down and unable to rise. It is important that a veterinarian assess horses demonstrating neurological signs since it can be difficult to distinguish this from other serious diseases such as rabies.

Agricultural Information Contact Centre
1-877-424-1300

E-mail : ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca
www.ontario.ca/omafra

EHV-1 infection is easily spread to other horses by nose-to-nose or close contact with an infected horse, by sharing contaminated equipment including bits, buckets and towels or by the clothing and hands of people who have recently had contact with an infected horse. It is important, therefore, to restrict movement for 21 days (or 14 days with testing provisions) of both people and horses where EHV-1 has been diagnosed. Any person leaving a facility to care for or be in contact with horses elsewhere should change their clothes, shoes/boots and wash their hands before leaving the property. Facility owners should also inform all service providers that have attended the facility within the last week, including, but not restricted to, veterinarians, farriers, feed suppliers and transporters, of the presence of the virus at the facility so they can take appropriate precautions.

Prevention is the best medicine

Biosecurity is key to preventing spread of EHV-1. Implementing routine biosecurity measures is the best way to minimize viral spread and should be in place at all times to prevent a disease outbreak. Such measures include hand hygiene and basic cleaning and disinfection practices. Horses that have been shipped long distances (out of province) and that are entering environments with a high risk for viral spread (young competition horses), should be segregated for 14 days prior to entering the general population.

EHV-1 vaccines marketed for prevention of respiratory disease may reduce viral shedding but are not protective against developing the neurological form of the disease in the vaccinated animal.

For additional information:

OMAFRA EHM Advisory 05-21-2020

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/ahw/ehm.htm>

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/french/food/inspection/ahw/ehm.htm>

AGCO

<https://www.agco.ca/blog/horse-racing/may-2020/industry-notice-confirmed-cases-ehv-1-woodbine-racetrack-monitoring-and>

OMAFRA

Preventing Disease Spread - Personal Hygiene and Disinfectants around Horse Barns:

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/horses/facts/prev-disease-spread.htm>

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Horses - Health Management and Biosecurity:

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/horses/health.html>

Equine Neurological Disease Surveillance 2018:

http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/horses/facts/nhd_surv2018.htm

CFIA

National Farm and Facility Level Biosecurity Standard for the Equine Sector:

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/biosecurity/standards-and-principles/equine-sector/eng/1460662612042/1460662650577>

EQUINE GUELPH

Equine Biosecurity Risk Calculator:

http://www.equineguelph.ca/Tools/biosecurity_2011.php

ALBERTA VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AND ALBERTA EQUESTRIAN FEDERATION

Equine Biosecurity Principles and Best Practices:

[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/cpv13683/\\$FILE/equine_biosecurity_principles_and_best_practices_guide.pdf](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/cpv13683/$FILE/equine_biosecurity_principles_and_best_practices_guide.pdf)

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