

From: Keith Roehr, State Veterinarian

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RE: Dr. Lutz Goehring's article; A critical view on Equine Herpesvirus-1 and on Equine Herpesvirus-associated Myeloencephalopathy (EHM)

As part of my role as State Veterinarian of Colorado, I recently attended the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) meeting. The diagnosis and management of outbreaks of Equine Herpesvirus Myeloencephalopathy (EHM) was one of the major items discussed at this meeting. Based on hearing some new information about EHM at the meeting I asked Dr. Lutz Goehring, an equine medicine faculty member at Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, to write an update on EHM that we could share with you. Dr. Goehring 's PhD was on the epidemiology of EHM and he is doing ongoing research related to EHM, so he is very qualified to provide this update.

Some key take home messages I took away from the update are:

1. Horses with acute onset of neurologic disease may have EHM. There may have been a recent history of equine travel or new additions on the operation where an EHM case occurs and some horses may have recently had a fever or respiratory disease.
2. There are multiple diseases that can cause similar signs to EHM so it is important to collect appropriate diagnostic samples (nasal swab and whole blood in anticoagulant) to determine if EHV-1 is the cause of disease.
3. The diagnostic testing for EHV-1 has progressed significantly and results of testing can be available in a timely manner. To do the best job for you and your clients the laboratory needs to receive correctly collected samples. There is a demonstration in Dr. Goehring's summary of how to collect nasal swabs for EHV-1 testing. In addition there is a diagram in the summary detailing the disease and nasal shedding timeline that illustrates the importance timing of sample collection.
4. EHV-1 is a contagious disease and currently there is no vaccine that carries a label claim for prevention of EHM. Thus it is important to promptly implement protocols to reduce the risk of spread of the virus during the work up period and subsequent to making a definitive diagnosis.
5. EHM is a reportable disease in Colorado, so if you examine horses that you suspect to be EHM cases please notify my office. Dr. Goehring and other equine faculty at CSU are available for consultation about equine neurologic cases as well.