

NYS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS
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FAST FACTS ABOUT EQUINE RHINOPNEUMONITIS

DEFINITION

EQUINE RHINOPNEUMONITIS (EHV-1 & 4) IS A RESPIRATORY DISEASE, COMMON IN AREAS OF HIGH HORSE CONCENTRATION, ESPECIALLY AMONG WEANLINGS; ANOTHER FORM (EHV-1) OF THE DISEASE CAN CAUSE ABORTION AS WELL.

CAUSE

The virus Herpes virus 1 and Herpes virus 4 are the causative agents.

CLINICAL SIGNS

SIGNS OF EHV-1 & 4 INCLUDE FEVER, CONGESTION, COUGH, LOSS OF APPETITE, NASAL AND EYE DISCHARGES, FATIGUE, AND SWOLLEN LYMPH NODES (ESPECIALLY IN YOUNG HORSES). EHV-1 CAN ALSO CAUSE ABORTION, STILLBIRTHS OR WEAK FOALS, AND NEUROLOGIC DISEASE.

DIAGNOSIS

THE CLINICAL SIGNS (FOR RESPIRATORY EHV-1 & 4) ARE PRIMARILY USED TO BASE THE DIAGNOSIS. ALTHOUGH SIMILAR TO OTHER RESPIRATORY DISEASES, VIRAL ISOLATION FROM NOSE AND THROAT SWABS IS DIFFICULT AND CHECKING ANTIBODY LEVELS FROM BLOOD SAMPLES IS OFTEN NOT RELIABLE. EXAMINATION OF AN ABORTED FETUS IS NECESSARY FOR DIAGNOSIS (OF EHV-1 ABORTION).

TREATMENT

NO SPECIFIC TREATMENT FOR THE RESPIRATORY DISEASE OR FOR ABORTION OR WEAK FOALS. REST AND SUPPORTIVE NURSING CARE AND ANTIBIOTICS FOR SECONDARY INFECTIONS. MEDICATIONS IF FEVER OVER 104°F.

PROGNOSIS

RECOVERY IN UNCOMPLICATED CASES OCCURS WITHIN SEVERAL WEEKS. FREQUENTLY, BACTERIAL INFECTIONS FOLLOW. HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE CAPABILITY MAY BE PERMANENTLY AFFECTED UNLESS TRAINING IS DISCONTINUED AND STALLS ARE WELL VENTILATED AND DUST-FREE. RECOGNITION OF DISEASE IS ESSENTIAL TO PREVENT AN "ABORTION STORM" OR RESPIRATORY OUTBREAK AMONG ALL HORSES.

PREVENTION

STRICT QUARANTINE OF ANY NEW ANIMALS BROUGHT ON THE PREMISES AND IMMEDIATE ISOLATION OF SICK HORSES. VACCINATION PROGRAM SHOULD INCLUDE ALL HORSES ON PREMISES. AFTER AN ABORTION; CLEAN AND DISINFECT AREA. ALL MARES IN CONTACT WITH AFFECTED MARE SHOULD BE ISOLATED AND HANDLERS MUST BE CAREFUL TO NOT SPREAD DISEASE BY EQUIPMENT OR HANDS.

VACCINATION

Vaccination of all healthy horses should be done with adequate boosting and frequency of these revaccinations (frequency depends on factors, which vary farm to farm). Vaccination helps prevent disease and reduces the amount of virus shed.

-Dr. Lyda W. Denney-