

March 2025 Newsletter

Equine Herpes Virus



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Equine Herpes Virus (EHV) is a very common contagious viral infection which can cause respiratory disease, abortions and neurological disease. There are six different viruses, but the two which commonly cause disease in horses are: EHV-1 is less common cause of respiratory disease, but it can cause the more severe effects of abortion and neurological disease.

EHV-4, this type commonly causes respiratory disease.

Respiratory related symptoms include:

- Nasal discharge- often mild and watery
- Coughing
- Swollen glands
- Lethargy
- Inappetence
- Depression
- Pyrexia
- A dry intermittent cough
- Reduced athletic performance

There is no evidence to suggest that a mare who has previously aborted due to EHV, will be any higher risk than another mare. However, it is important not to expose other pregnant broodmares to any mare that has recently aborted, due to EHV, as they may also abort.

Neurological clinical signs can include:

- Paralysis
- Collapse
- Abnormal behaviour
- Death

EHV abortions can occur suddenly with no obvious signs prior to the abortion

EHV can take weeks to recover from and can have an impact on a horse's athletic career for months.

Once a horse has been infected, they carry EHV for the rest of their life. The majority of horses catch EHV from their dams in their first 6 weeks of life. As a result, **80-90% of the horse population in the UK carries EHV.** These horses can all shed the virus without showing clinical signs. This reactivation and shedding can occur whenever a horse is stressed, for example with travelling or moving yards.

It is impossible to completely eliminate your horse's exposure to EHV, however, there are steps you can undertake to reduce your horse's exposure and minimise their risk.

Reducing Risk

- You can reduce exposure to EHV by minimising contact with other horses. It is also important to lessen any impact of stress, for example, minimising long journeys travelling, or being stabled without friends for extended lengths of time.
- Young horses going through periods of stress, such as weaning, should be kept separate from other groups, as they are at high risk of developing and spreading EHV.
- Isolate new horses for a month on arrival and monitor their temperatures.
- Horses competing at FEI are required to have their temperature monitored prior to competing and, whilst at the competition, to reduce the risk of EHV spread.

If you know your horse is likely to experience a stressful situation it is possible to boost their immune system with a series of 3 injections – Please speak to the vets if this is of interest.

Practice News

Don't forget to follow us on Facebook and Instagram. We regularly share cases and veterinary related information as well as upcoming events. We also have a YouTube page.



Vaccination

- You can vaccinate your horse for EHV. This reduces the impact if your horse is exposed to EHV and, the amount they shed to other horses.
- The vaccination doesn't stop the virus, but it lessens the clinical signs and, reduces the overall impact of the disease.
- EHV vaccinations should be given every 6 months, after an initial two vaccinations, one month apart.
- The vaccination doesn't guarantee to stop abortions for broodmares, but does reduce the risk and, the risk of abortion storms in groups of broodmares.
- Broodmares should be vaccinated at the 5th, 7th and 9th month of pregnancy.