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MDOL Monitoring Possible Exposures to Equine Herpes Virus

The Montana Department of Livestock (MDOL) is monitoring an outbreak of Equine Herpes Virus (EHV-1) that has led to the death of horses in several states.

Some horses appear to have been exposed to the severe neurological form of EHV-1 at the National Cutting Horse Association (NCHA) Western National Championships in Ogden, Utah, held April 30-May 8, 2011. Confirmed and suspected cases of the disease have been reported nationwide.

EHV-1 can cause a wide range of symptoms, from a complete lack of clinical signs to fever, nasal discharge, incoordination, hind-end weakness, lethargy, urine dribbling and diminished tail tone. It also can cause acute paralytic syndrome, which results in high mortality. The virus is easily spread by airborne transmission, horse-to-horse contact and by contact with nasal secretions on equipment, tack, feed and other surfaces. People can spread the virus to horses by means of contaminated hands, clothing, shoes and vehicles.

Currently there is no equine vaccine for protection against the neurological strain of the virus, which poses no human health risk.

Montana horse owners who attended the event, or who have horses that share facilities with horses that attended the event, should carefully monitor the health of their horses for signs of the disease and/or any unusual behavior. Horse owners who suspect a problem should immediately contact their local veterinarian.

“We’re hopeful that no Montana horses were infected,” said state veterinarian, Dr. Marty Zaluksi. “The incubation period is typically 2-14 days, so we may be in the clear.”

Sixteen horse owners and 30-35 horses from Montana attended the event. No cases of the disease have been reported within the state.

In an effort to be proactive and provide the maximum safety to horses across the country, NCHA affiliate organizations and show producers in Montana, Oregon, Oklahoma, Texas, California, Wyoming, New Mexico, Washington and Nevada have cancelled previously scheduled shows for the weekend of May 20 – 22, 2011.

An NCHA/American Quarter Horse Association event scheduled for June 4-5 in Dillon has also been cancelled; a decision about an event scheduled for July will be made at a later date.

Additional Resources:

- [A Guide To Understanding the Neurologic Form of EHV Infection](#)
- [USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service Resources](#)
- [American Assoc. of Equine Practitioners Fact Sheet](#)