

Equine Herpesvirus 1 (EHV-1)

What is equine herpesvirus 1 (EHV-1)?

Equine herpesvirus 1 is a contagious equine virus that can cause four clinical presentations: neurological disease, respiratory disease, neonatal death, and abortion.

Clinical signs:

- Fever commonly precedes other clinical signs
- Respiratory disease
- Fever, coughing, nasal discharge
- Abortion. Usually occurs in late pregnancy (8+ months), but can occur as early as 4 months with no warning signs
- Neurologic disease, also known as equine herpesvirus myeloencephalopathy
 - Hind-end weakness and incoordination
 - Leaning against wall or fence to maintain balance
 - Urine dribbling or inability to urinate
 - Down and unable to stand

Incubation:

- The incubation period is typically 4-6 days, but is highly variable and may be as short as 24 hours.
- When neurologic disease occurs, it is typically 8-12 days after fever begins.

How is the virus spread?

- The most common way to spread EHV-1 is by direct horse-to-horse contact.
- EHV-1 can also spread indirectly through contact with physical objects contaminated with the virus, such as tack, grooming equipment, feed and water buckets, and people's hands or clothing.

How is the virus treated?

- Supportive care and anti-inflammatory drugs
- Antiviral medications for horses with the neurologic form
- Sling support for horses with severe weakness and incoordination

- Isolation of affected horses to prevent spread of infection
- Antibiotics may be given if your veterinarian is concerned about secondary bacterial infection

How is the virus prevented?

- Vaccinations are available to control the respiratory and abortion manifestations of EHV-1.
- Current vaccines do not reliably prevent development of the neurological form.
- Your veterinarian may recommend vaccination to help reduce spread of the virus.

Does EHV-1 affect other animals?

- EHV-1 does not affect humans, dogs, cats, sheep, goats, cattle, pigs, or birds.
- Alpacas and llamas are susceptible to EHV-1.

Additional Information:

- [American Association of Equine Practitioners](#)
- [United States Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant Health Inspection Service](#)

This fact sheet is meant to provide basic information. For specific health concerns please contact your physician or veterinarian. Updated 2012.