

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD, AND FORESTRY

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HORSE DISEASE COULD AFFECT OKLAHOMA BREEDERS

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Oklahoma City—Oklahoma agriculture officials are warning horse breeders of a rare, contagious disease that can result in infertility in mares. Contagious Equine Metritis was confirmed last month in Kentucky and one Oklahoma mare has been identified as having been in contact with an infected stallion.

The mare is under quarantine and is not considered a health threat of any kind.

“This is a disease that poses no threat to humans but it could potentially pose a serious economic threat to our state’s horse industry,” said State Veterinarian, Becky Brewer. “It is transmitted between animals during breeding and at this time we have no documentation that it can be spread through artificial insemination.”

Infected stallions can carry the CEM bacteria yet show no clinical signs of the disease. She said detecting the disease is difficult and requires multiple tests over a period of about a week to determine if a horse is infected.

Infected horses can be successfully treated with antibiotics.

“The most important thing for Oklahoma horse breeders to know at this point is that the disease is here and biosecurity measures are critical,” Brewer said. “We have no knowledge of any infected stallions in Oklahoma and owners should be cautious before shipping a mare out of state for breeding.

“Breeders collecting semen for artificial insemination should also make sure they thoroughly clean and disinfect collecting equipment after each use,” she said. “This is how it is being spread and keeping this equipment clean is important.”

CEM was first diagnosed in the U.S. in Kentucky in 1978 and then a year later in Missouri. Both outbreaks were quickly eradicated.

More information is available on the USDA website at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/hot_issues/cem/index.shtml.

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