



To: Newsroom Directors and Assignment Editors

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Contact Anne Fitzgerald
800.282.8685 (DE only)
302.698.4520
302.242.4092 (Cell)

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Equine herpesvirus – (EHV-1) found on a Delaware horse farm

Today, Dr. Heather Hirst, Delaware State Veterinarian announced that PCR test results from the University of Kentucky confirm that a Standardbred horse in Kent County has tested positive for equine herpesvirus-1 (EHV-1), a highly infectious viral disease of horses. The horse showed signs of illness on December 3, 2008 and blood and nasal swab samples were sent to the University of Kentucky immediately for analysis. The horse's clinical signs progressed and it was euthanized at the facility on December 7. Earliest clinical signs of the neurologic form of EHV include fever (101.5 F or higher) and ataxia (incoordination). The respiratory form of the disease may or may not precede the neurologic form. The virus is spread most commonly via infectious respiratory secretions, but may also be carried on contaminated equipment, clothing and hands of personnel.

The horse had no record of racing, qualifying or training at Dover Downs. The Delaware Harness Racing Commission investigative unit is conducting a thorough investigation of this matter in conjunction with the Delaware Department of Agriculture. The State Veterinarian's Office and the owners of the horse have implemented biosecurity measures and protocols to prevent the spread of the disease into Delaware's equine community.

- The horse farm was notified of quarantine on December 6.
- Release of Quarantine:
 1. The quarantine will be in effect for a minimum of 21 days past the conclusion of the most recent case of EHV (fever, nasal discharge or neurologic signs) in an equine on the premises.
 2. At the end of 21 days without clinical signs, the diagnostic test status and clinical status of each of the equines on the quarantine premises shall be evaluated and certified by a state official or Delaware Department of Agriculture-designated veterinarian.
- If during the 21 day quarantine another clinical case presents, the 21 day quarantine cycle begins again, and this quarantine order will be reassessed.
- If an equine requires movement from the premises prior to the 21 day quarantine period the following criteria must be met:
 - o Any equine exposed to a clinical case must have two consecutive negative PCR samples, 3 days apart beginning seven days after the last known case, at the owner's expense.

Regular updates regarding this investigation will be available on the Delaware Department of Agriculture's website www.dda.delaware.gov.

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EHV-1 information from USDA Animal and Plant Health inspection Service (APHIS):

- Equine herpesvirus type 1 (EHV-1) typically causes a disease of horses called equine rhinopneumonitis, or “Rhino”. It is found in horses worldwide but does not affect humans. EHV-1 usually causes respiratory symptoms with fever, but it can also cause abortion, nervous system (neurologic) disease, or death.
- EHV-1 has several different strains, and new strains are thought to develop from natural genetic mutations of the herpesvirus. These strains or mutations are thought to be responsible for some outbreaks of the neurologic form of the disease. The neurologic form can cause a wide variety of symptoms, including incoordination, weakness or paralysis of the hind limbs and tail, incontinence, and loss of skin sensation. The horse may become paralyzed, or go down and be unable to get up in the hind end. The paralysis can be progressive and in some cases, the animal may die.
- The virus can spread via contact with an infected animal, through the air, via contaminated equipment, or via a handler’s clothing and hands. An infected animal can be latently infected and sporadically shed the virus, showing only mild (sometimes unnoticeable) clinical signs.
- Veterinarians and horse owners should continue to quarantine suspect and diagnosed cases. Using strict biosecurity measures in day-to-day procedures, even when disease is not suspected, is very important in preventing the introduction and spread of infectious diseases. Information on equine biosecurity practices can be found on the AAEP website at:

http://www.aaep.org/pdfs/control_guidelines/Biosecurity_instructions%201.pdf

For more information on EHV-1, please contact the State Veterinarian’s Office at the Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA) or check the DDA’s website:

Phone: (800) 282-8685 (DE Only)
(302) 698-4500

Fax: (302) 697-6287

<http://www.dda.delaware.gov/>

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