

Equine Herpes Virus Update

1. Equine Rhinopneumonitis is a highly contagious virus which can cause respiratory symptoms resembling a cold, late term abortions in mares, or a rare neurological form causing hind end weakness, difficulty urinating, and in some rare cases recumbency and death. The current Wellington outbreak is the neurological strain of this virus and fortunately most cases will only have a fever and never get the neurological form of this disease.
2. This virus is spread from horse to horse through contact with nasal secretions. It is also spread from human to horse if you come into contact with an animal shedding the virus and then contact a non-infected horse.
3. The incubation period is usually 7-10 days, however sometimes can be as long as 21-28 days.
4. The first sign of exposure and infection is a fever which can be as low as 101.2 to as high as or greater than 104. These fevers may rise, fall and then spike again. Some cases have a persistent high fever which is difficult to control with anti-inflammatory medications. Treatments are geared towards decreasing the fever and supportive care, such as IV fluids if dehydrated, etc. There are no known drugs to kill the virus in horses. An anti-viral drug used in humans has and is being tried in some cases; however there is no evidence which shows it is even absorbed into the horse's body in levels high enough, or in the right form to be useful.
5. The **most effective** way to fight an outbreak of this highly contagious virus is to identify infected animals as early as possible and to isolate those animals and barns.
6. **Follow Biosecurity protocols.**

Wellington Herpes Virus Biosecurity Protocol:

1. Monitor every horse's temperature twice daily. Report all fevers with a temp > 101.0 to your Veterinarian **immediately**.
2. Limit unnecessary horse and people traffic in and out of the barn.
3. Use antiseptic foot baths and hand cleaners every time anyone comes into or leaves the barn.
4. Horses in the Southfields residential area and the barn where the infections may have originated (south east corner of Palm Beach Point) are under a strict quarantine. No horses are allowed into or off of these locations until further notice. All horse shows are cancelled for the next 7 days (beginning 12.16.2006). Please be mindful of how infectious this virus is and limit any unnecessary movement of horses for these next 7 days also. Keep your horses where they are.