

Update on the herpesvirus outbreak in Spain

An equine herpesvirus type 1 (EHV1) outbreak has recently emerged in Valencia, Spain, in February where over 750 sport horses took part in the Valencia Spring Jumping Tour. Both neurological and respiratory forms have been identified.

Since then, the RESPE (epidemiological monitoring network) has confirmed more EHV1 cases linked to the cluster in Valencia in Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, as well as certain regions in France (Haute-Savoie, Calvados, Seine-et-Marne and Hérault).

Consequently, the FEI, FFE (French Equestrian Federation) and the SHF (French Horse Society) jointly decided to suspend all international and national equestrian competitions as well as all training events and grouping of horses until March 28 2021 included.

The transport of horses, including lorries, vans, equipment and personnel, remains a major risk factor in the propagation of the virus which has subsequently created these clusters. It is therefore vital to remain vigilant and to avoid all co-transportation and mixing of populations (specifically horses from different yards or those under different vaccination protocols).

General care and management of horses (such as water feeders, buckets, equipment), transport vehicles and all personnel (hands, clothing) can also be indirect vectors of transmission and can further the viral propagation.

Vaccinated horses that have been in contact with the virus but remain asymptomatic can also be vectors. These animals can be contagious for a shorter amount of time and shed less amount of pathogen. Although they may appear clinically well, they remain equally important sources of disease transmission such as is the case now or that of the meeting at Pau racecourse in January.

Important reminders:

- Do not mix sport horses with race horses,
- **Biosecurity and basic sanitary precautions:** to limit the propagation of the virus within shared stable yards, as is the case in most equine establishments. If neglected, a much more widespread dissemination of the virus could take place and paralyse even more equestrian activities.
 - Monitor temperature morning and night for a month, as well as monitoring appetite, faeces, body condition score, and signs of poor performance.
 - Declare clinical signs: call the veterinarian as soon as any clinical signs appear such as coughing, nasal discharge or fever.
 - Test suspect cases using PCR tests from accredited laboratories: in case of a positive test result, isolate the entire yard from traveling, and reduce workload for other horses.
 - Isolate clinically sick or suspected cases by method of quarantine.
 - Do not transport any sick, suspected cases or in contact horses.
 - Thoroughly clean and disinfect vehicles, stables, and equipment after each horse with **virucidal grade products**

- **Prevention is key:** vaccination remains of utmost importance in reducing the spread of the disease. Vaccination not only protects the individual animal to reduce the risk of infection, and/or reduce the severity and length of time of clinical signs. It equally reduces the viral load secreted by the infected animal, helping to limit propagation to other animals. In this sense, the more horses vaccinated the less propagation of the pathogen, which thus reduces the risk of an epidemic by providing collective immunity.
During an outbreak, it is highly recommended for all healthy horses that have not been in contact with suspected cases but **vaccinated over 6 months ago** to receive a booster vaccination at this time.

Reminding everyone to play his or her part and remain vigilant in the next couple of days to weeks to come depending on the progression of the situation.

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