

Equine Herpesvirus-1 (EHV-1) Fact Sheet

Overview

Equine Herpesvirus-1 (EHV-1) is a common, highly contagious virus affecting horses, donkeys and mules. It spreads through respiratory secretions, shared equipment, trailers and contaminated environments. EHV-1 can cause respiratory disease, abortions, foal death and a serious neurologic condition known as Equine Herpes Myeloencephalopathy (EHM). EHV-1 does not infect humans.

The incubation period for EHV-1 is typically 2-10 days, and can become dormant, reactivating later.

Clinical signs of EHV-1 include:

- Fever
- Nasal discharge
- Cough
- Lethargy
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Weak or stillborn foals
- Hindlimb weakness or incoordination
- Difficulty rising
- Loss of tail tone
- Urinary retention
- Recumbency (unable to stand)

Diagnosis

Veterinarians diagnose EHV-1 primarily through PCR testing of nasal swabs and whole blood. PCR is the most accurate method. Early testing and immediate isolation are essential to limiting virus spread.

Treatment

There is no cure, but consult your veterinarian about options for supportive care. All infected horses must be strictly isolated to help prevent the spread of the virus.

Prognosis

- Respiratory cases: Typically recover fully.
- Reproductive cases: Mares usually recover; foals rarely survive.
- Neurologic cases: Highly variable. Mild cases may improve; severe paralysis often carries a poor prognosis.

Prevention

- Vaccinate according to veterinary recommendations.
- Isolate new horses for 2-3 weeks before introducing them to the herd.
- Avoid sharing halters, water buckets, grooming tools, tack, etc.
- Disinfect barns and equipment regularly.
- Monitor temperatures daily during high-risk periods.
- Limit horse movement during regional or local outbreaks.

Immediate isolation and veterinary evaluation of any suspected case are critical.

Contacts

- New Mexico Livestock Board: 505-841-6161.
- Call New Mexico Department of Agriculture's Veterinary Diagnostic Services for questions about EHV-1 testing: 505-383-9299.
- Call your local veterinarian for questions about diagnosis, treatment and vaccination.

Resources

- [Statement from the New Mexico Livestock Board](#)
- [American Association of Equine Practitioners](#)
- [Equine Herpesvirus \(USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service\)](#)
- [Understanding the Neurologic Form of EHV Infection \(USDA APHIS\)](#)

