

# Incurable Viral Disease Detected In Group Of Horses

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) - Equine infectious anemia (EIA), an incurable infectious viral disease of horses, has been identified as the disease affecting 21 horses in Pennsylvania's Wayne County.

A veterinarian in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences urges all horse owners and horse boarders to test their stock for this disease.

"This disease has been with us a long time," said David Griswold, research associate in veterinary science. "Infected

horses are detected in Pennsylvania every year, but seldom in such a concentrated grouping."

The outbreak originated at two Wayne County farms that provide riding horses for various summer camps in the area. Eighteen of the 21 horses in those herds that tested positive for the disease have been destroyed. Three other horses are quarantined. However, not all the horses that may have been exposed to EIA have been accounted for.

Horses infected by EIA can be

identified by using the Coggins test, a blood test that identifies the antibodies that form to fight the virus. Those that test positive can be euthanized or quarantined. "A quarantined horse must be held in a screened-in pen at least 200 yards away from other horses," Griswold said.

"It takes from two weeks to a month from the time the horse is infected to form enough antibodies to give a positive test result, so owners may have to test more than once if a horse shows any symptoms," Griswold said.

Symptoms of the disease are:

- Depression. The horse may seem lethargic and not eat well.
- High fever.
- The mucus membranes may turn yellow.

• At times there may be swelling in the legs and brisket.

About a third of the horses with the disease will die within a month of infection. Another third will experience chronic symptoms off and on, and can linger up to one year before dying. Some horses will show no symptoms at all, which makes testing all the more important, Griswold said.

The disease is transmitted by blood transfer from one horse to another. "Biting insects, particu-

larly horseflies and mosquitoes, are the main vector of the infection," Griswold said. "The prime time for infection is in the warmer months when insect activity is common."

Griswold lists some management tips for horse owners:

- Before buying any horse, insist on a negative Coggins test result within the last 30 days.
- Diligently remove manure and use insect repellents to control flies.

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## Venture's Ultimate Goal

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user-friendly program for Poland, AgStar has translated both the Barn Owl program and the milk record reports to Polish.

"This AgStar venture could bring a lot of profits into the parent companies," said Slusser. "This will lower the costs of developing new software and improve profits for our members by lowering fees."

AgStar Technologies will be led by a Board of Directors made up of farmers representing both Pennsylvania DHIA and Dairy One. Representing Pennsylvania DHIA are Norman Hershey of Gordonville, William Itle of Loretto, Dale Hoover of Lebanon, and Adam Derr of Dawson. Dairy One named Keith Whittaker of Whitney Point, NY; Peter Jacquier of East Canaan, CT; Clyde Rutherford of Otego, NY; and William Cook of Aurora, NY, as its representatives on the board. In addition to the interna-

tional venture, Pennsylvania DHIA and Dairy One are also determining ways they can work together locally.

"We're not merging, but we are going to partner with each other to save costs wherever we can," said Slusser. Some of those cost savings may be on trucking, processing, and in other areas.

"Pennsylvania DHIA already partners with bull studs and local milk cooperatives," said Slusser. "This is the first time we were able to find another DHIA interested in partnering."

According to Slusser, a lot of the details for working together domestically still need to be developed. Several meetings will be held over the next couple of months to explore options for working together.

The bottom line is that both organizations want to come together to lower their costs to their members, ultimately improving dairy farmer profits.



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