

## **Norwegian Horse Festival – Notification of suspicion of equine herpes virus**

There's clinical suspicion of Equine herpes virus in one horse that has been competing in international classes during NHF. The horse displayed neurological and mild respiratory symptoms. It has left the show area. The diagnosis is NOT confirmed, but we wish to inform all participants so you can make the necessary precautions while the horses are stabled here, and for when the horses are to leave the show. All attendees will be notified when the test results are available.

Equine Herpes Virus is not a notifiable disease in Norway, but we urge all international participants to familiarize themselves with their national regulations concerning infectious diseases, and Equine Herpes Virus in particular.

### **The virus**

EHV causes four clinical syndromes:

- Respiratory disease
- Abortion
- Neonatal foal death
- Neurological disease.

EHV is contagious and spread by direct horse-to-horse contact via the respiratory tract through nasal secretions. It is important to know that the virus can also spread indirectly through contact with physical objects that are contaminated with the virus, for example via unwashed hands, tack or clothing etc. Also it is known that the virus can be airborne. The virus can survive in the environment for a couple of weeks.

Pay particular attention to respiratory and neurological symptoms.

### **Clinical signs**

Respiratory disease – High body temperature, coughing, nasal discharge. Affected horses often seem generally unwell and not eating or drinking normally. Neurological disease – Behavioral changes, lack of coordination of the hind (and occasionally fore) limbs. Urine retention/dribbling, mild colic, bladder weakness, inability to rise. The neurological signs may be preceded by fever and respiratory signs.

In vaccinated horses the clinical signs are mostly attenuated or absent, but vaccinated horses can if infected also spread the virus.

### **Incubation time**

After the horse has been infected, some may show symptoms after 24 hours, but typically it takes 4-6 days, or sometimes longer.

### **Diagnosis**

In acute cases of respiratory or neurological disease, nasal swab sampling can be undertaken. The sample is analysed by PCR that can detect the virus.

## **Prevention measures on the competition site applicable to all:**

1. Check and record the body temperature of the horse twice daily. Any temperature over 38.5 should immediately be reported to the Veterinary Delegate/Veterinary Service Manager.
2. Assess your horse's general condition: appetite, drinking, behaviour, breathing rate, heart rate, urination and defecation, eye or nose discharges, how the horse is standing and moving, swollen legs:

### **Vital Health Signs**

A normal healthy horse would have the following set of vital signs:

- Temperature 36.5-38.5C
- Breathing rate 8-15 breaths/min
- Heart rate 25-45 beats/min

### **General Health Examinations**

- Look for eye or nose discharges
- Observe how the horse is standing
- Check for consistency and number of droppings
- Check consumption from water buckets and feed bowl
- Assess horse's general appearance

3. Have dedicated tack/equipment for each horse and disinfect the bit after riding.

4. Do not share buckets; no common water trough.

5. Wash and disinfect hands.

6. Do not let horses sniff each other, limit contact as much as possible, including human contact, apart from rider and regular groom.

## **Management of suspected and confirmed cases**

- Contact a veterinarian immediately if disease is suspected.
- Isolate the suspected horse (If at the show: contact the treating vet and stewards). All horses will be allowed to leave the NHF, but we recommend everyone to take precautions, and isolate the horses upon arrival back home until sample results from the suspected case is available.
- Stop all movement on and off the premises until your vet advises and for at least 28 days.

- Disinfect and destroy bedding, clean and disinfect premises, equipment and vehicles used for horse transport.
- Maximize biosecurity