Equine Herpesvirus 1 (EHV-1)

What is equine herpesvirus 1 (EHV-1)?
Equine herpesvirus 1 is a contagious equine virus that can cause four clinical presentations: neurological disease, respiratory disease, neonatal death, and abortion. There are 2 forms of EHV-1, the neuropathic and non-neuropathic form; despite the names both forms can cause neurologic disease.

Clinical signs:
- Fever commonly precedes other clinical signs
- Respiratory disease
- Fever, coughing, nasal discharge
- Abortion. Usually occurs in late pregnancy (8+ months), but can occur as early as 4 months with no warning signs
- Neurologic disease, also known as equine herpesvirus myeloencephalopathy (EHM)
  - Hind-end weakness and incoordination
  - Leaning against wall/ fences for balance
  - Urine dribbling or inability to urinate
  - Down and unable to stand

Incubation:
- The time of exposure to onset of clinical signs is typically 4-6 days, but is highly variable and may be as short as 24 hours
- When neurologic disease occurs, it is typically 8-12 days after fever begins

How is the virus spread?
- The most common way to spread EHV-1 is by direct horse-to-horse contact
- EHV-1 can also spread indirectly through contact with physical objects contaminated with the virus, such as tack, grooming equipment, feed and water buckets, and people's hands or clothing

How is the virus treated?
- Supportive care and anti-inflammatory drugs
- Antiviral medications for horses with the neurologic form
- Sling support for horses with severe weakness and incoordination
- Isolation of affected horses to prevent spread of infection

How is the virus prevented?
- Vaccinations are available to control the respiratory and abortion manifestations of EHV-1
- Current vaccines do not reliably prevent development of the neurological forms
- Your veterinarian may recommend vaccination to help reduce spread of the virus

Does EHV-1 affect other animals?
- EHV-1 does not affect humans, dogs, cats, sheep, goats, cattle, pigs, or birds
- Alpacas and llamas are susceptible to EHV-1

For horses returning from shows, the following precautions are recommended:
Shows with CONFIRMED cases of EHV-1:
- Isolate returning horses from the rest of the stable
- Closely monitor horses for fevers, respiratory disease or neurologic signs for 3 weeks
- Take temperature twice daily and if >102F contact your veterinarian
- Equipment should be cleaned. EHV is readily killed with many common disinfectants including dilute bleach, quaternary ammonium compounds, accelerated peroxide and peroxygen compounds, and iodophors

Shows with NO KNOWN EHV-1 cases but during an EHV-1 outbreak elsewhere in the state:
- Monitor as described above for 2 weeks, isolation not needed

Additional Information:
American Association of Equine Practitioners
http://www.aaeep.org/-i-101.html

United States Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant Health Inspection Service

This fact sheet is meant to provide basic information. For specific health concerns please contact your physician or veterinarian. Updated 2014