

EIA

Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA)

Every horse owner has heard of it and probably has had their horse tested for it...but what is it?

Equine Infectious Anemia, or EIA, is a viral disease that affects the immune system. The virus is closely related to the HIV virus of humans (but neither is transmitted to the other). EIA generally has three different forms:

- 1 *Acute*, when the virus is active.
- 2 *Chronic*, when the animal may suffer occasional bouts of clinical signs.
- 3 *Inapparent*, during which the horse carries the virus but shows no apparent symptoms. Stress or disease may bring on an acute episode.



TRANSMISSION

EIA is transmitted by blood from an infected horse. This most commonly comes from blood-sucking insects (e.g. horse flies, deer flies, mosquitoes). Other modes of transmission include contaminated objects (like reused needles) or from mare to foal in utero.

SYMPTOMS

EIA is difficult to diagnose because the symptoms vary from horse to horse and can mimic many other diseases. **Some horses do not show ANY signs of disease!!!**

Signs may include one or more of the following: fever,

depression, decreased appetite, fatigue, rapid breathing, sweating, rapid weight loss, swelling of legs or chest, weakness/wobbly gait, colic or abortion. In other words...vague and common symptoms.

THE COGGINS TEST

The only way to accurately determine whether a horse is infected with the EIA virus is by a blood test, or Coggins Test.

RISK FACTORS

1. Any environment that puts your horse into contact with other horses (especially at shows, sales, or stables where a current negative Coggins Test is not required).
2. Certain geographic areas such as the Gulf Coast states have a higher incidence of EIA than other areas. Warm, wet regions also have a higher incidence, but EIA can occur anywhere!!! Wisconsin has positive cases every year!!

PREVENTION

There is no effective treatment for EIA. There is no vaccine to prevent it. There is no cure! Good management can reduce the potential of infection. Guidelines:

- * Use disposable needles- one per horse -for all vaccines and medications.
- * Test all horses for EIA at least annually.
- * Stable owners should require a current negative Coggins certificate before introducing new horses.

- * New horses should be quarantined for 45 days.
- * Keep stable areas clean, dry, and waste-free. Manure management to discourage insects.
- * Horses at greater risk such as travelling to shows should be tested more frequently (every 4-6 months).

REGULATIONS

Since there is not a cure for this lifelong disease, testing and eradication is the only answer.

Every state (and foreign countries) has requirements regarding EIA testing and transporting of horses.

A Coggins test in Wisconsin is currently valid for one CALENDAR year - Jan 1 to Dec 31. (Illinois is 12 months from the date of testing and Michigan is 6 months from date of testing.)

Horses with EIA are infected for life and endanger the health of other horses. Thus, the USDA requires euthanasia (or very strict lifelong quarantine w/ permanent brand) of any positive EIA horse.

Although the incidence has decreased steadily with this program, it is still a concern for you and the horse industry. Take it seriously, the consequences of a positive horse are devastating!

Reminder: All horses coming to our hospital must have a current negative Coggins test.