

# New Jersey Department of Agriculture

## Memo

**To:** Veterinarians

**From:** Manoel Tamassia, DVM, MS, PhD, Dipl. ACT, State Veterinarian

**Date:** November 15, 2013

**Re: Pennsylvania Racehorse Tests Positive for EHV-1**

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Bureau of Animal Health and Diagnostic Services notified the NJ Department of Agriculture that racehorses from Parx Racing in Bensalem, Bucks County have tested positive for Equine Herpes Virus (EHV-1) and are showing clinical signs of EHV-1 infection. One horse is showing signs of Equine Herpes Myeloencephalopathy (EHM). Additional horses exposed to the positive horse are showing clinical signs of EHV-1 infection. None of the affected horses has died. Additional horses are being tested and an epidemiologic investigation has started. Neither EHV-1 or EHM are threats to human health.

Four exposed horses have been traced to NJ and the NJ Department of Agriculture has started its own investigation to prevent the potential spread of the disease. One horse raced in NJ and has returned to Pennsylvania. The horse is quarantined at the Pennsylvania race track. The race took place 10 days before the beginning of the outbreak. The remaining three horses are being treated for the disease in a couple of NJ veterinary clinics. The positive horses are isolated and quarantined.

EHM is caused by Equine herpesvirus-1. EHV-1 virus can spread quickly from horse to horse, has a high morbidity, and can cause a wide range of symptoms from a complete lack of clinical signs to respiratory problems, especially in young horses, and spontaneous abortions in pregnant mares. Transmission of the virus is mostly via direct contact with infected horses and materials. For this reason, tack must not be shared between horses and biosecurity measures must be utilized. While highly infectious, the virus does not persist in the environment and is neutralized by hand soap, alcohol-based hand sanitizers, and sunlight. Horse owners should be attentive to the clinical signs of EHM and contact their veterinarian immediately if horses have fever and neurologic signs.

Information about the disease and control methods can be found on the NJ Dept. of Agriculture [web site:](http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah/diseases/equineherpesvirus.html)  
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EHV-1, like other viral diseases affecting horses' neurological systems, must be reported to the state veterinarian at 609-671-6400 within 48 hours. A neurologic disease worksheet

must be completed for each case reported. The worksheet is available via the internet at the following website and once completed can be faxed to the Division at 609-671-6414:  
<http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah/pdf/neuroworksheet.pdf>. The NJDA-Division of Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory is available to assist with EEE, WNV, and EHV-1 testing needs.