

Horse tests positive for EHV-1 at West Bend stable

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MADISON, Wisconsin – A horse kept at a 50-horse stable in West Bend has tested positive for equine herpesvirus-1 (EHV-1), says Dr. Paul McGraw, Wisconsin’s State Veterinarian with the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). EHV-1 is a highly contagious virus that causes respiratory disease, reproductive failure, and intermittent outbreaks of neurologic disease in horses. Humans cannot acquire EHV-1.

The horse began showing neurologic signs earlier this week and was humanely euthanized. Three other horses currently have a fever and are being monitored while being held in isolation from the other horses in the barn. The premises has been quarantined, which means that there is no movement of equine animals on or off the premises. DATCP will work with the stable owner and the veterinarian to determine when the quarantine will be released.

Symptoms that should alert horse owners to the possibility of neurologic EHV-1 infection include fever, weakness and incoordination, and urine dribbling or inability to urinate. Horses with these symptoms should be examined immediately by a veterinarian. Suspect horses should be isolated from healthy horses and tested for EHV-1.

“Horses with a fever and symptoms of contagious respiratory infection should be kept at home and not taken to shows, competitions, clinics or public trail rides,” McGraw says. Horse owners should also be aware that transportation of horses to competitions, shows and clinics may increase the risk of exposure to infectious organisms.

Although humans can’t be infected by EHV-1, they can aid in spreading it to their horses. Therefore, owners of affected horses should wash and disinfect their hands and change their clothes before coming into contact with healthy horses to prevent the potential spread of these infectious organisms.

The DATCP is providing information resources and situational updates on its website at datcp.wi.gov/animals/animal_diseases and on social media at facebook.com/widatcp, and twitter.com/widatcp.