

What are “high risk” horses?

Certain management and geographic factors put horses at greater risk for contracting EIA. These include:

- Pasturing horses in damp, swampy areas
- Pasturing horses in areas where EIA testing is not routinely done.
- Animals that are in frequent contact with outside horses or that live or travel in geographic regions known for EIA outbreaks.
- Environments that have a constant influx of new horses, especially if negative Coggins certificates are not required.

Exposure to other horses at events such as shows, clinics, sales, etc. especially if rigorous health care regulations are not enforced and a current Coggins certificate is not required.

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GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

EIA became a federally reportable disease in Canada in 1971. By law, all positive cases must be reported to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). EIA-positive horses must then either be euthanized or permanently quarantined. Owners of euthanized horses are compensated by the CFIA at a specified rate for the loss.

The CFIA requires that horses being imported into Canada test negative to the Coggins test.

Horses entering the US from Canada must be accompanied by evidence of a negative Coggins test within 180 days prior to export.

For more information

Contact the Disease Surveillance Veterinarian, Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock Branch, Room 202, 3085 Albert Street, Regina Saskatchewan, S4S 0B1 or call (306) 798-0253.



**Saskatchewan
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**This document was prepared in
co-operation with the above
associations.**

Further information on equine biosecurity practices can be found at:

- www.avma.ab.ca/resources/documents/EquineBiosecurityPrinciplesandBestPracticesguide.pdf

EQUINE INFECTIOUS ANEMIA (Swamp Fever)

LIVESTOCK AGRICULTURE

Information for Saskatchewan horse owners



What is EIA?

EQUINE Infectious Anemia (EIA), also known as Swamp Fever, is a viral disease affecting the world's horse, donkey and mule population. Although EIA poses no risk to human health, the virus is closely related to the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Like HIV, this virus affects the immune system. There is no cure and, once infected, horses remain carriers for life.



The EIA virus infects and reproduces in blood cells. The horse's immune system destroys these blood cells causing anemia. The virus also causes inflammation which damages organs such as bone marrow, liver and

kidneys. Secondary infections may occur because of damaged immune systems. Horses may die from direct effects of EIA or from secondary infections.

There are three general forms of EIA:

1) **Acute:** Seen within one to two weeks after a horse first becomes infected. During this phase the virus is active, multiplying and harming the immune system and other organs. High levels of the virus will be found in the blood.

2) **Chronic:** If the horse survives the acute phase, a chronic phase may occur. Symptoms such as fever, depression, weight loss and anemia are most likely to be seen in this phase. The animal may appear to improve and then relapse, often repeatedly. Virus levels in the blood continue to be high.

3) **Inapparent Carrier:** Over time, episodes of illness may decrease until the horse shows no clinical signs. These inapparent carriers are infected for life and become a source of infection for other horses. Stress or disease can initiate an acute episode.

How is EIA transmitted?

The EIA virus is transmitted by blood, or from mare to foal during pregnancy. Horse-to-horse transmission most commonly occurs via biting insects, such as deer and horse flies. Re-used needles and syringes can also spread EIA. The virus can also be found in semen.

What are the symptoms of EIA?

EIA is difficult to diagnose because the symptoms vary from horse to horse and can resemble other diseases. Additionally, some animals don't show any obvious signs (inapparent carriers). Symptoms may include one or more of the following:

- Fever
- Depression
- Small hemorrhages in mucous membranes
- Decreased platelet numbers
- Decreased red blood cell numbers (anemia)
- Swelling of legs, lower chest and abdomen
- Fatigue, reduced stamina or weakness
- Rapid breathing
- Rapid weight loss
- Nasal bleeding
- Pale or yellowish mucous membranes
- Irregular heartbeat and/or weak pulse
- Colic
- Abortion

Detecting EIA

The Coggins test is the most widely used test to detect EIA. An ELISA test is available which can provide results more quickly; however, this may not be as accurate as the Coggins test. A positive ELISA is verified by a Coggins test. The certificate of EIA status has become known as the "Coggins Certificate" and is commonly referred to by this name regardless of which test was used.



How do we prevent the spread of EIA?

The following BIOSECURITY MEASURES can help minimize the risk of EIA transmission:

- Institute a good fly control program. Provide adequate drainage to discourage breeding sites for pests.
- Use disposable needles and syringes, one per horse, for vaccinations and medication.
- Sterilize dental tools and other instruments before using them on other horses.
- Test ALL your horses at least once a year – one infected animal puts all your horses at risk! High-risk horses should be tested more frequently.
- Test high-risk horses every 4-6 months.
- Farm and stable operators should require a current Coggins certificate before allowing new horses onto the premises
- Horse shows, racetracks, rodeos and other events should require a current Coggins certificate for all horses entering the event.
- Keep new horses in isolation for 45 days and observe them for any signs of illness before introducing them into the herd. Daily rectal temperatures will help detect sick horses.