



First Wisconsin Case of EIA Confirmed in Taylor County Horse

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MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) confirms that a horse and a mule on the same premises in Taylor County have tested positive for equine infectious anemia (EIA). These are Wisconsin’s first confirmed cases of EIA in almost 15 years. There is no treatment for EIA, therefore to prevent transmitting it, infected animals are humanely euthanized.

“EIA is a devastating disease for horses and their owners. Horses that are not euthanized must be isolated from other horses, which is not usually feasible due to their herd nature, and the lifelong quarantine creates animal welfare issues for the infected horse,” said Dr. Julie McGwin, DATCP equine program veterinarian. “Horses that survive the initial infection become carriers of the disease and are infectious for life. It’s important for horse owners to work with their veterinarian to have regular testing done for this disease as an infected horse can appear healthy.”

EIA is an infectious and potentially fatal viral infection that affects only equine species, such as horses, ponies, zebras, mules, and donkeys. Symptoms can vary and may include fever and uncontrollable bleeding that can progress to weakness, weight loss, depression, and in some cases death. Horses can get the disease through blood-feeding flies, such as horseflies and deerflies. The virus can also be transmitted between horses through re-used needles and syringes, blood transfusions, and other contaminated equipment. To reduce the risk of infection, horse owners should implement fly control measures during fly season, sterilize all needles and syringes used for injections, clean and disinfect equipment shared between animals, and isolate any animals with an unknown EIA status until test results are confirmed as negative. There is no evidence that EIA is a public health concern.

Due to the seriousness of this disease, state law requires all horses coming into Wisconsin or traveling to shows be tested (also known as a Coggins test) and found negative for EIA (https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/HorseOtherEquineMvmt.aspx). This information is documented by a licensed veterinarian on an animal’s certificate of veterinary inspection, also known as the animal’s health certificate. If any horse tests positive, state law also requires the veterinarian to report this to DATCP within 10 days (https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/DiseaseReportingRequirements.aspx).

For more information about EIA, visit https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/EquineInfectiousAnemia.aspx. DATCP's Division of Animal Health monitors animal health and disease threats, promotes the humane treatment of animals, and provides licensing and registration regulation for animals in Wisconsin.

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