

Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA): Coggins Test

Equine infectious anemia (EIA) is an infectious viral disease caused by a lentivirus, which is a similar virus to HIV in people. The virus that results in EIA, however, is species specific and does not cross species (stays only within horses). Horses that are infected with the virus can develop anemia (low red blood cell count), fever and other blood cell changes. Following infection some horses develop serious disease. One important aspect of EIA infection is that once a horse is infected they will remain infected lifelong. An infected horse can therefore harbor the virus which can be transmitted to other horses by blood transfer, such as by certain blood consuming insects, blood exchange (shared needles) or whole blood transfusion.



Equine infectious anemia exists (is endemic) in the U.S. and the most effective method of control is to test horses for viral infection (e.g. Coggin's test). In the United States all horses are required to be tested for this viral infection. State laws require testing, but in some states horses are tested annually while in other states horses are required to be tested twice a year (every 6 months). Currently we do not have a vaccine that is effective for prevention of this disease. As a result of effective surveillance programs we uncommonly see EIA in the United States, overall at about 0.01-0.02% annually among the equine population.

Recently, EIA positive horses were identified at a farm in northwest Nebraska, meaning that they were positive for viral infection. Based on state and national requirements these horses will have additional testing to confirm infection.

Additional information can be obtained regarding the implications of having an EIA infected horse in the United States http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/nahss/equine/eia/eia_info_sheet.pdf

Take home points:

- ✓ Equine infectious anemia (EIA) is an infectious viral disease of horses.
- ✓ Infection can result in serious illness, such as anemia and intermittent fever.
- ✓ Once infected horses harbor the virus for the remainder of their life and provide a potential source of virus that may be transmitted to other horses.
- ✓ State and national laws require annual testing (Coggin's test) for the virus, particularly for horses that cross state lines.
- ✓ Contact your veterinarian to determine the EIA status of your horse if it has been greater than a year since testing.

If you have additional questions, please call your veterinarian or the VHC at 785-532-5700 or visit us online www.vet.ksu.edu/VHC/equine.