

CALIFORNIA HORSE RACING BOARD**M e m o r a n d u m**

Date : May 17, 2011

To : Racing Secretaries, Stable Superintendents, Official Veterinarians, Owner & Trainer Organizations & Other Interested Parties

From : Rick M. Arthur, DVM
Equine Medical Director

Subject : Multi-State Equine Herpes Virus (EHV-1) Outbreak in Cutting Horses

Currently, there are numerous reports of equine herpes virus myeloencephalopathy (EHM) affecting horses and farms across Canada and the U.S. including California. EHM is a neurological complication of Equine Herpes Virus (EHV-1). This outbreak appears related to initial cases at a cutting horse show in Ogden Utah, which was held from April 29 - May 8. While I do not expect this outbreak to impact race tracks in California there is evidence horses at that event may have been exposed to this virus and subsequently spread the infection to other horses. Horse-to-horse contact, aerosol transmission, and contaminated hands, equipment, tack, and feed all play a role in disease spread. While the true extent of this disease outbreak is uncertain; there is clearly a very significant elevated risk of EHM cases at this time. EHV-1 strains with a high incidence of EHM are thought to carry very high viral loads and therefore carry a likelihood of spreading.

As of today, May 17, 2011, there are no state or federal restrictions on horse movement related to this outbreak.

Even though the risk should be low, the most likely avenue for introduction of this EHV-1 outbreak to California race tracks will be ponies and Quarter Horses. Horsemen are advised to closely monitor temperatures on new arrivals-including pony horses-for the first week they arrive at the track. The incubation period of EHV-1 infection is typically 1-2 days, with clinical signs of fever then occurring, often in a biphasic (twice a day) fever, over the following 10 days. Diagnostic confirmation can be made by nasal swabs sent to the appropriate laboratory.

Control of any viral outbreak, especially EHV-1, is critically dependent on biosecurity. Additional information on basic biosecurity can be found at the CHRB website.

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