



The WeCAHN Equine Network met 12th June 2025 with veterinarians, laboratory diagnosticians, researchers, and provincial veterinarians in attendance, to discuss equine health events of Q1 (January - March) 2025.

1) Overview

Data sources in this report include:

1. Clinical Impressions Surveys completed by network practitioners.
2. Data shared by western veterinary diagnostic laboratories: Manitoba Veterinary Services Diagnostic Laboratory (VSDL), Prairie Diagnostic Services (PDS), and University of Calgary College of Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Services Unit (UCVM DSU).
3. Scan: equine surveillance and important animal health issues reported by other sources or networks.



2) Syndromic Surveillance

Network veterinarians' responses based on frequency of presentation:

- **Rarely** = 1-2 times over the 3 month period;
- **Commonly** = 1-2 times per month;
- **Very frequently** = 3+ times per month.



Systems affected **very frequently** included respiratory, musculoskeletal, digestive and dermatologic. **Commonly** seen were trauma or injury related issues. Multisystemic, cardiovascular, congenital, reproductive or neurological conditions were reported **rarely**.

Respiratory disease

Network veterinarians reported upper respiratory conditions with a viral cause **rarely** or **commonly**. Strangles were reported **commonly** or **very frequently**.

Practitioners reported increasing frequency of strangles (*Streptococcus equi* subsp. *equi*) relative to the same period last year, however, the confirmed laboratory cases were within the control limits.

Digestive system disease

Very frequent conditions reported by practitioners include oral and dental, and colic. **Common** digestive conditions include oral and dental, esophageal, stomach, diarrhea in foals, and colic. Digestive conditions reported **never** include infectious liver disease and diarrhea in adults.

Neorickettsia risticii (Potomac Horse Fever (PHF)) was not diagnosed this quarter.

Reproductive system disease

One case of equine herpesvirus type 1 (EHV-1) linked to abortion in a Quarter Horse was confirmed by a laboratory this quarter.

Cardiovascular system disease

One case of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) was diagnosed at the lab in a 12-year-old American Paint Cross mare.

Dermatological system disease

Practitioners reported ticks **commonly** or **rarely**, and lice **never** or **rarely**.

Relative to the same period last year, ticks were reported as increasing and lice as stable. Network practitioners commented on the limited availability of tick control products for equines (compared to products for cattle or dogs).

3) Interesting cases

Laboratory cases:

- 17-year-old Mustang mare with unknown vaccination history, progressive neurological signs (circling, shaking, head pressing, and others). Eventually had to be euthanized. Necropsy findings: bronchopneumonia. Also, a 6x3x5 cm mass in the brain. Primary brain tumors in horses are extremely rare. Feed aspiration pneumonia was probably a consequence of the neurological deficit caused by the brain tumor.
- 9-year-old Pony gelding found dead. Subtle signs included mild lethargy during the 2 weeks prior, a mild fever (39.2°C), and stumbling when entering the stall the night prior to death. Laboratory diagnosis: septicemia with multiple organ damage.

Practitioner's cases:

- The neurological cases reminded them of a client's horse, long time ago, which had been treated for a hoof abscess several weeks prior to neurological disease and death. *Fusobacterium necrophorum* was cultured from pus around the brain (these are the same bacteria that cause foot rot).
- Two colts: a warmblood and a mini in different, unrelated premises. Had recurrent signs of colic, constipation, dribbling urine and mild fevers. The warmblood passed away. On post-mortem, the lymph nodes of the rectum were inflamed and had abscesses. The mini was treated with antibiotics and recovered. He was placed on a soft diet and mineral oil.
- Recent outbreak of equine influenza in farm of mini horses. 50 affected. No travel, no introductions to the herd. Not sure how they got infected. 10% with complications of bacterial pneumonia. Less severe cases seen in the show minis, the practitioner suspects that they had some immunity from past infections.

4) Scan

Equine Disease Communication Centre (EDCC) disease alerts ([LINK](#))

The EDCC reported the following cases for the first quarter of 2025:

- Equine infectious anemia (EIA) in Saskatchewan identified by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) as part of an ongoing disease investigation. The horse had history of previous contact with free-roaming horses in an EIA endemic area
- Ontario: 1 case of Equine herpesvirus – neurologic form - and 8 cases of strangles in multiple regions.
- Quebec: 1 case of Salmonellosis and 1 case of strangles.

Cluster of EIA in the US

- 21 confirmed cases in California, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Texas ([EDCC, 2025](#)). A Texas equine clinic was identified as the source of two clusters of EIA cases in 2024. Cases are linked to improper clinic practices in its ICU, including the reuse of needles and syringes that led to the contamination of heparinized saline used to flush IV catheters. The investigation continues by the USDA-APHIS. [LINK](#) to article.

Comments by veterinarians:

- EIA contaminated needles were reused to draw heparin. Bottles of contaminated heparin were used to prepare heparinized saline bags used in the ICU.
- It could have been a bush track or another high-risk patient that led to the contamination. Bush track races are unsanctioned and unregulated. All sorts of things happen during those races.
- These are likely to be valuable in horses if the owners paid for ICU care.
- Obvious medical malpractice, and dire legal consequences for the clinic involved.



Comments from practitioners on reusing needles or syringes in equine practice:

- Not at the barns where they work.
- May use the same multi-dose syringe, for example, if injecting the same medication to a group of related horses. Never reuse needles. Never between different clients.
- Do not reuse a needle for any purpose.

Update on avian influenza:

- Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1 is still present in Canada ([CFIA](#)) and in the United States ([USDA](#)).
- On May 31, 2025, the CFIA released an update on a British Columbia ostrich farm infected genotype D1.3, a strain not identified elsewhere in Canada ([press release](#)).
- Cases of HPAI H5N1 continue to be detected in the US dairy herds. As of June 12, 2025, the total is 1,073 cases in 17 states. Link to [USDA HPAI in livestock](#) webpage.
- No cases of HPAI have ever been detected in Canadian cattle. As of May 30, 2025, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency ([CFIA](#)) [laboratories](#) tested 4,003 raw (unpasteurized) milk samples at processing plants; all samples were negative HPAI.
- A total of 70 human cases of HPAI have been reported by the [CDC](#) in the US.

Meeting takeaways

- Strangles continues to be seen frequently in Canada.
- 2025 began with high tick activity. Practitioners are trying to find an effective way of controlling ticks in horses of all ages.
- A multi-state Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) outbreak linked to a single veterinary clinic in Texas is a good example of the risks associated with reusing needles.

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