



The WeCAHN Equine Network held a quarterly virtual meeting on June 4th, 2026. Network members discussed animal health events from January to March, 2026. Veterinary practitioners, diagnosticians, veterinary college faculty, researchers, public veterinarians, and industry representatives attended the meeting.

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 Diagnostic Services (VDS) laboratory, Prairie Diagnostic Services (PDS) laboratory, and University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Services Unit (UCVM DSU).
3. Scan: equine surveillance reported by other sources or networks.

2) Interesting Cases

i. Increased respiratory disease associated with Equine herpesvirus and *Streptococcus* infections in Manitoba and other provinces

- A Manitoba practitioner reported a rise in respiratory illness linked to Equine herpesvirus (EHV-2 and EHV-5) and *Streptococcus* spp.
- More than a dozen horses showed mild fever, nasal discharge, and coughing, with many cases resolving without complications.
- Two high-performance horses did not recover as expected, including one horse diagnosed with Equine Multinodular Pulmonary Fibrosis (EMPF) linked to EHV-5.
- Lung sample testing helped support detection of EHV-5 and confirmation of severe lung disease.
- Similar respiratory cases were also reported in other provinces, prompting national review of potential trends.

ii. Sudden unexplained death in an adult Quarter Horse gelding

- A healthy 17-year-old Quarter Horse barrel horse in Saskatchewan was found dead shortly after routine conditioning and feeding.
- Post-mortem examination found no evidence of injury, digestive blockage, or major organ disease.
- Tissue changes in the liver and lungs were considered old parasite lesions and not related to the cause of death.
- Laboratory examination did not identify a clear cause of death, and a sudden heart rhythm disturbance (arrhythmia) was considered the most likely explanation.
- No toxicology testing was performed, although it may be considered in similar unexplained sudden deaths.



iii. Severe stomach and small intestine disease in a weanling colt

- A 7-month-old Thoroughbred colt showed poor growth, drooling, stomach reflux, and recurring colic after weaning.
- Examination of the stomach revealed severe inflammation, an ulcer and narrowing of the small intestine that blocked passage of the scope.
- The condition was judged to have a very poor outlook, and the foal was euthanized.
- Post-mortem findings confirmed chronic stomach damage, an intestinal ulcer and a severe narrowing of the small intestine likely present before weaning.
- Early use of non-selective anti-inflammatory drugs and dietary transition after weaning were considered possible contributing factors.

iv. Transient rectal blockage in an older Quarter Horse gelding

- A 26-year-old Quarter Horse in British Columbia developed sudden severe colic with no prior digestive history and good reported parasite control.
- Rectal examination identified a complete obstruction that resolved quickly with gentle manual pressure.
- The horse's pain signs resolved rapidly after the obstruction was released.
- The horse recovered fully within hours but passed small blood clots for two days before returning to normal.
- The event was considered a temporary rectal blockage, with parasites considered unlikely to be involved.

v. Respiratory disease and lung fibrosis associated with Equine herpesvirus in an old pony

- A 23-year-old pony of the Americas in British Columbia with multiple chronic health conditions including cancer developed worsening respiratory disease.
- The horse showed rapid decline despite ongoing supportive management for lung and inflammatory disease and was euthanized.
- Post-mortem examination confirmed EMPF linked to Equine herpesvirus type 5.
- Other horses on the same property remained healthy and were not tested.
- Possible increased susceptibility due to immune suppression from underlying disease and treatments was discussed.

vi. Severe parasitic intestinal disease in a young Quarter Horse gelding

- A 3-year-old Quarter Horse gelding with unknown parasite control history developed weight loss, poor appetite, and limb swelling.
- Diagnostic testing showed severe inflammation, protein loss, and fluid accumulation in the chest.
- Post-mortem findings included intestinal blockage and extensive damage caused by heavy larval worm infestation.
- The disease was linked to *cyathostomins*, with additional bot larvae found incidentally. Unusually mild winter conditions likely influenced early larvae development.
- Severe disease was associated with lack of effective parasite control and heavy worm burden leading to intestinal dysfunction and swelling.



3) Syndromic and Laboratory Surveillance

Important information

Clinical impression surveys

Never; **Rarely** = 1-2 times per 3 months; **Commonly** = 1-2 times per month; **Very frequently** = 3+ times per month.

'Control charts'

Control charts are a simple way of presenting data collected over time (e.g., increasing or decreasing detection frequencies). Each data point reflects the number of positive samples or cases reported by a diagnostic laboratory over 3 months (quarter of a year). The upper and lower horizontal lines are called control limits. Individual points lying outside the control limits suggest a need for investigation to determine whether/how significant a signal they represent.

High importance equine infectious diseases

- *Equine herpesvirus* was reported from **never** to **very frequently**, with overall trends described as **stable** to **increasing**.
- *Equine protozoal myeloencephalitis* and Potomac Horse Fever were reported from **never** to **commonly**, with trends **stable**.
- Influenza was reported from **never** to **commonly**, with trends **stable** to **increasing**.
- Strangles was reported across the full range from **never** to **very frequently**, with overall trends **stable**.
- West Nile virus, EEE, WEE, EIA, EVA, and salmonellosis were not reported and trends remained **stable**.



Respiratory system disease

- Upper respiratory disease was reported from **rarely** to **very frequently**, with viral causes and strangles showing **stable** to **increasing** trends.
- Lower respiratory infectious disease ranged from **never** to **very frequently**, with bacterial causes generally **stable** and viral causes **stable** to **increasing**.
- EMPF associated with *Equine herpesvirus-5* was reported from **rarely** to **commonly**, with **stable** to **increasing** trends.
- Asthma was **commonly** to **very frequently** reported and generally **stable** to **increasing**, while exercise-induced bleeding showed **stable** to **decreasing** trends.
- UCVM-DSU and PDS reported pneumonia cases, including bacterial infections with *Klebsiella pneumoniae* and *Streptococcus equi* subsp. *zooepidemicus*. *S. equi* subsp. *equi* (strangles) was identified at multiple laboratories, with two cultures at VDS exceeding upper control limits.

Digestive system disease

- Oral and dental disease ranged from **rarely** to **very frequently** across reports.
- Stomach disease, including gastric ulcers and impactions, was **commonly** to **very frequently** reported with **stable** trends.
- Colic was **commonly** to **very frequently** reported, with impactions and spasmodic forms showing **stable** to **increasing** trends.
- Gastrointestinal parasites ranged from **never** to **very frequently**, with strongyles **commonly** reported and **stable** trends overall.
- PDS reported intestinal strangulation, peritonitis from intestinal accidents, and impactions, all within expected patterns.
- Alberta clinicians reported **increased** diarrhea in foals, with detection of *Clostridium difficile*, *C. perfringens*, *Rhodococcus*, coronavirus, and salmonella. Some foals tested positive for both Salmonella and *C. difficile*, although salmonella was not considered clinically significant in those cases.
- PDS reported parasitic enteritis (intestinal inflammation) in a young horse, with this diagnosis remaining infrequent overall.

Multisystemic disease

- Fever of unknown origin and lymph node disease were **very frequently** reported.
- Immune-mediated disease, neonatal loss, and toxicities were **rarely** reported.
- Neoplasia, including lymphoma, was **commonly** reported.
- UCVM-DSU reported *Staphylococcus haemolyticus*, which has appeared intermittently since early 2025.
- PDS reported a thyroid gland tumor and other isolated findings without evidence of control limit exceedance.

Neurological system disease

- Trauma-related neurologic disease was **very frequently** reported.
- Infectious neurologic disease was **commonly** reported, with Equine herpesvirus noted as **very frequently** and **increasing**.
- Equine protozoal myeloencephalitis was **commonly** reported and **stable**.
- UCVM reported cervical vertebral stenosis (Wobbler syndrome) as a confirmed diagnosis.

Reproductive system disease

- Abortions were **rarely** reported, with bacterial, viral, and twin-related causes also **rarely** and **stable**.
- Female reproductive tract disease was **commonly** reported, while most other reproductive conditions were rare or absent.
- PDS and UCVM reported idiopathic (i.e. unknown cause) and viral abortions, with most findings within expected control limits.
- *Arcanobacterium hippocoleae* and *Corynebacterium uterequi* were isolated in multiple cases, all within control limits. One mastitis case yielded *Trueperella pyogenes*.

Dermatological disease

- Allergic dermatitis, bacterial infections, and fungal infections were reported from **rarely** to **commonly**.
- External parasites were **rarely** reported overall, with lice and ticks showing **stable** to **increasing** trends.
- Sarcoids were **commonly** to **very frequently** reported.
- PDS diagnosed sarcoids and other skin conditions, all within control limits.

Trauma, injury or welfare-related issue

- Dental abnormalities were **rarely** to **very frequently** reported.
- Frostbite was generally **never** reported, with isolated occurrences.
- Traumatic injuries, including fractures, were **rarely** to **commonly** reported.



4) Scan of emerging and important diseases

i. CAHSS equine dashboard [AHSS equine dashboard](#) (EIA, WNV, EEE)

- Canada reported 37 cases of Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) between January and April 2026 across five premises. Most cases were detected in Alberta, with one new case reported in Manitoba.
- A large cluster (23 cases) was linked to a follow-up investigation on a farm near Clearwater, Alberta.

ii. EDCC Canada summary (Q1 2026) <https://equinediseasecc.org>

- Neurologic equine herpesvirus was reported in Ontario (one case).
- Strangles was reported in British Columbia (6 cases) and Ontario (17 cases).
- Cases were geographically limited but indicate continued regional circulation of respiratory disease.

iii. Vesicular Stomatitis Virus (United States, USDA-APHIS)

- Vesicular Stomatitis New Jersey virus was first detected in Arizona in October 2025, with later spread to Arizona, Colorado, and the latest case in New Mexico in May 2026.
- The situation is being actively monitored by U.S. animal health authorities due to its livestock movement and trade implications.
- Official updates are available from USDA-APHIS: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov>

iv. New World screwworm (Mexico and United States)

- New World Screwworm continued to move northward in Mexico, with detections close to the Texas border.
- The first U.S. case since 1966 was confirmed in a calf in Texas in June 2026. Affected areas in Texas were placed under quarantine, restricting movement of warm-blooded animals requiring veterinary inspection.
- Authorities and surveillance networks raised concerns about spread via wildlife and feral animals. Increased awareness and preparedness in Canada, specially for travelling horses, were highlighted as important due to seasonal risk.
- Official updates are available via [SENASICA](#), and [USDA](#).

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI H5N1, North America)

- No HPAI has been detected in Canadian cattle or milk to date.
- Poultry outbreaks were reported in SK and AB between April and May 2026.
- A fatal infection was confirmed in a rural cat in [Saskatchewan](#) after scavenging a dead wild goose.
- In the United States, new cattle cases were reported after a pause, bringing totals to 1,093 cases across 20 states ([LINK](#)).
- Poultry outbreaks continued in both commercial and small flocks in the United States, with no new human cases reported since 2024.

5) Other updates

Regulatory challenges of SGLT2 inhibitors

- SGLT2 inhibitors, only approved for human use, are increasingly reported in horses despite no established equine regulatory guidance.
- Key concerns include lack of withdrawal guidelines, uncertain regulatory status, and challenges in detecting use for enforcement purposes.
- No validated equine testing method has been approved, limiting monitoring capacity for regulators and event organizations.
- The FEI (Fédération Équestre Internationale, Switzerland) maintains an updated list of [equine prohibited substances](#). Participants noted that substances not permitted by [Equestrian Canada](#) should be considered prohibited.



Horse owner take aways

Respiratory illness was an important issue this quarter. Veterinarians reported more cases involving equine herpesvirus (EHV), including a serious lung disease linked to EHV-5. Strangles was also diagnosed in several provinces, reminding owners to watch for respiratory illness and work with their veterinarian to help reduce disease spread.

Several unusual digestive problems were identified. These included severe parasite infections, diarrhea in young foals caused by several different germs, stomach and intestinal ulcers in a weanling, and a rare intestinal condition in an older horse. These cases highlight the importance of early veterinary attention when horses develop digestive signs.

Several animal health threats continue to be monitored. Most Canadian cases of equine infectious anemia this quarter were linked to one investigation in Alberta. Canada remains free of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in cattle, but New World screwworm has reached Texas for the first time in decades and Vesicular Stomatitis Virus cases continue in the southwestern United States.

New challenges are emerging for the horse industry. Questions remain about the use of certain drugs like SGLT2 inhibitors in horses because regulations and testing methods are still being developed.

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