Western Canadian Animal Health Network

WeCAHN EQUINE NETWORK OWNER REPORT

APRIL - JUNE 2026

The WeCAHN Equine Network held a quarterly videoconference meeting on September 24th, 2026. The network members discussed the animal health events from April to June, 2026. Veterinary practitioners, diagnosticians, veterinary college faculty, public veterinarians, researchers, 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,University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Services Unit (UCVM DSU) and, for the first time: British Columbia Animal Health Centre (AHC).
3. Scan: equine surveillance reported by other sources or networks.

2) Interesting Cases

i. Dental disease and sinus infections

Two horses in the same barn had sinus problems linked to diseased teeth: a 30-year-old Quarter Horse gelding and a 10-year-old Warmblood mare. The gelding's sinus infection resolved after affected teeth were removed and the sinus was surgically opened; the mare had a fractured tooth removed and a precautionary sinus procedure. Dental examinations and imaging are important when a horse has suspected sinus disease. Veterinarians also expressed concern about invasive dental procedures performed by people without appropriate veterinary qualifications.

ii) EHV-1 abortions in a group of mares

Six of about 100 mares aborted within five days in April; the group had experienced another abortion the previous December. The mares appeared healthy, but testing of a stillborn foal confirmed equine herpesvirus-1 (EHV-1). Because the mares had already mixed together, exposure within the group was considered possible. The veterinarians discussed monitoring temperatures, limiting horse movements, strengthening biosecurity and reviewing vaccination practices to help manage the outbreak.

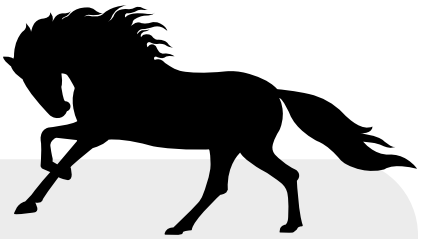


iii. A difficult strangles test result

A five-year-old Arabian mare at a facility with a strangles outbreak initially tested negative. A later lab test before travel gave a "suspect" result, despite a normal examination of the guttural pouches. The laboratory recommended taking another sample. A weak positive test may have several explanations, including very low levels of the strangles bacterium or contamination; veterinarians emphasized follow-up testing before making movement decisions.

iv) Interpreting uterine cultures

Pre-breeding testing in four mares found several bacteria that can be present without causing disease. Veterinarians stressed that culture results should be interpreted with evidence of inflammation and the mare's clinical history, rather than automatically treated. Careful sample collection helps avoid contamination. Participants discussed a non-antibiotic uterine lavage product containing tris-EDTA and the importance of avoiding unnecessary antibiotics.



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.

NEW: Surveillance reporting was presented as a trend analysis instead of focusing on the current quarter. It describes disease patterns over 5 quarters: from Spring 2025 to Spring 2026

High importance equine infectious diseases

Equine herpesvirus (EHV) was the strongest emerging infectious disease signal, with veterinarians reporting increasing activity in early 2026. Strangles remained persistent but generally stable, while equine influenza fluctuated without a sustained increase. Equine protozoal myeloencephalitis (EPM), a neurological disease, remained stable in 2026. Potomac Horse Fever (PHF) and West Nile Virus (WNV) were reported intermittently, while salmonellosis remained uncommon. No clinical cases of equine infectious anemia, Eastern or Western equine encephalitis, rabies, or equine viral arteritis were reported through the surveys.

Respiratory diseases

Veterinary observations: Equine asthma remained the most consistently reported respiratory condition, increasing during 2025 and early 2026 before stabilizing or decreasing in Q2. Strangles and bacterial respiratory infections persisted, while isolated increases in shipping fever, pleuropneumonia and fungal infections of the guttural pouch were reported. Viral respiratory infections varied between practices without a clear overall trend.

Laboratory findings: At Prairie Diagnostic Services (PDS), strangles continued to be detected, while *Streptococcus equi* subsp. *zooepidemicus*, a bacterium associated with respiratory infections, approached its upper control limit. EHV infections were also detected, including EHV-1-associated pneumonia in an aborted foal and an EHV-5-positive pony. Other bacterial detections, including *Bacillus pumilus, Klebsiella aerogenes* and *Staphylococcus saprophyticus*, approached upper control limits.

At the Veterinary Diagnostic Services laboratory (VDS), strangles detections exceeded control limits in Q1 2026 but returned to within expected limits in Q2. *S. zooepidemicus* detections remained within control limits.

At the University of Calgary Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Services Unit (UCVM), *S. zooepidemicus* detections increased to 31 cases in Q2, the highest quarterly count during the reporting period. Strangles continued to be detected, alongside occasional pneumonia and other respiratory infections.

At the BC Animal Health Centre (AHC), strangles was also detected in Q2. Historical comparisons are not yet available for this laboratory.

Digestive diseases

Veterinary observations: Dental problems, stomach ulcers and colic remained the most common digestive concerns. Colic and large-intestinal problems persisted, while isolated increases in small-intestinal and esophageal disorders were reported. Foal diarrhea decreased following an outbreak in Alberta during Q1 2026, and reports of intestinal parasites, particularly strongyles, also declined. One practice reported increasing *Rhodococcus equi* infections with treatment failures, while treatment failure was also reported for PHF.

Laboratory findings: At PDS, intestinal accidents were prominent in Q2, including four impactions, one strangulating lipoma, one intestinal torsion and two volvulus cases. Three cases of peritonitis and one case of enteritis were also diagnosed. *Enterococcus faecalis* was among the bacteria isolated, while earlier increases in *E. coli* and *Bacillus cereus* had not continued above control limits.

At UCVM, intestinal accidents included colon perforation, torsion and volvulus. Four cases of enteritis and seven of colitis were reported, including severe intestinal inflammation associated with *Clostridium* bacteria. *E. faecalis* isolations increased to their highest level during the reporting period, although bacterial isolation does not necessarily establish the cause of disease.

At VDS, several *Enterococcus* species were isolated, contributing to the increasing diversity of bacterial findings. No specific increase in intestinal disease was identified in the supplied results.

At AHC, laboratory findings included gastric rupture, gastric ulceration and *Enterococcus* isolations. Historical control-limit comparisons were not available.

Reproductive diseases

Veterinary observations: Uterine infections and inflammation remained the main reproductive concerns, with activity increasing during breeding seasons and declining in late 2025. Abortions were generally uncommon and showed no sustained increase, although one veterinarian reported more suspected bacterial abortions in Q2 2026. Ovarian disorders and placental problems declined, while other reproductive conditions remained uncommon.

Laboratory findings: At PDS, detections of *Arcanobacterium hippocoleae*, a bacterium isolated from reproductive samples, exceeded the upper control limit in Q2 2026. Its importance as a cause of disease remains uncertain. Laboratory investigations also confirmed an EHV-1 abortion and placentitis (infection or inflammation of the placenta) caused by *S. zooepidemicus*, which was resistant to several antibiotics.

At VDS, three *A. hippocoleae* isolates were reported in Q2. Other reproductive bacterial findings remained intermittent.

At UCVM, five *A. hippocoleae* isolates were reported, alongside cases of endometritis (uterine inflammation) and changes in the uterine lining. Endometritis remained a recurring laboratory diagnosis.

Other uterine bacteria, including *Corynebacterium uterequi*, were detected at low levels without exceeding control limits. Some isolates showed antibiotic resistance, reinforcing the importance of veterinary interpretation of culture results.



Neurologic diseases

Veterinary observations: Injuries, stringhalt, wobbler syndrome and head shaking remained the most consistently reported neurological problems. EHV-associated neurological disease increased in early 2026 before stabilizing in Q2, while EPM remained stable. Reports of shivers and WNV decreased, and other neurological disorders remained intermittent.



Multisystemic diseases

Veterinary observations: Fever of unknown cause and swollen or inflamed lymph nodes remained the most frequently reported conditions affecting multiple body systems. Reports of bloodstream infections (septicemia) and cancer decreased in Q2, although both continued to appear in laboratory investigations.

Laboratory findings: At PDS, *Streptococcus pluranimalium* detections increased above the upper control limit, making it an emerging bacterial finding. *Staphylococcus haemolyticus* also increased locally, with three detections in Q2. Bloodstream infections and various cancers continued to be diagnosed.

At VDS, detections of *Anaplasma phagocytophilum*, a bacterium associated with tick-borne infection, continued an increasing trend that began in 2024, with four detections in Q2 2026. Bloodstream infections and other multisystemic conditions were also identified.

At UCVM, bloodstream infections remained important, including *Salmonella* infections in two newborn foals. *E. coli* isolations increased alongside the number of submitted samples, without clear evidence of increased disease occurrence. Additional findings included cancers affecting multiple organs and occasional *S. pluranimalium* detections.

Across the laboratories, bloodstream infections and several emerging bacterial findings remained important surveillance concerns, even though veterinarians reported fewer clinical cases of septicemia in Q2.

4) Scan of emerging and important diseases

i) CAHSS equine dashboard (for EIA, WNV and EEE). Between April 1st and September 17th, 2026, three EIA cases were identified in Western Canada:

- **Manitoba:** One case identified during export biosecurity testing.
- **Alberta:** One case identified during biosecurity testing.
- **British Columbia:** One clinical case identified in a horse imported from Alberta.

ii) West Nile Virus (WNV)

Between April 1st and September 17th, 2026, equine and human surveillance revealed LINK

	Equine cases	Bird cases	Human cases	Mosquito pools
British Columbia	0	0	0	n/a
Alberta	3	0	2	n/a
Saskatchewan	2	1	1	n/a
Manitoba	1	64	8	432

iii) EDCC summary statistics for Canada, 2 2026 (LINK)

- Alberta reported two strangles cases in April/May 2026, followed by five reported cases across multiple counties in August 2026.
- Alberta also reported one case of Potomac Horse Fever and one EHV-1 abortion.

iv) Vesicular Stomatitis Virus (VSV) Sept 3, 2026, Situation Report

- First case of VSV New Jersey virus (VSNJV) reported on October 31, 2025, in Arizona.
- As of late September 2026, the United States reported 46 affected premises across Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico.
- Equine-only premises accounted for 43 of the affected locations, while three premises involved cattle only.

v) New World screwworm (NWS, *Cochliomyia hominivorax*) SENASICA dashboard (in Spanish) LINK

- Cases continue to be reported in Mexico. Oly 2 states are currently free of NWS: Baja California and Baja California del Sur. Ongoing surveillance information is available through SENASICA dashboard (in Spanish).
- The United States recorded recent cases in Texas and New Mexico involving horses, raising concerns regarding illegal equine movements ahead of the winter season.
- Additional information: USDA NWS detections website (screwworm.gov)

vi) Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI)

The Fall wild bird migration is on its way. Multiple commercial poultry cases have been confirmed in Manitoba and Alberta (LINK).

vii) Shamonda-like virus in continental Europe (beaconbio.org)

- Since July 2026, dairy cattle in France and Switzerland have experienced outbreaks of a disease causing high fever (over 40°C), diarrhea, loss of appetite and a sharp drop in milk production. Outbreaks generally last two to three weeks within affected herds.
- Researchers in Germany identified a previously unknown virus, provisionally called “Shamonda-like virus” (LINK). This is the first time viruses of this type have been detected in mainland Europe. (LINK). Two related strains have been found across several European countries, including France, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands. The virus may have entered Europe through biting midges, which can spread similar viruses (like Schmallenberg virus, bluetongue and EHD).
- Researchers are also investigating whether the virus causes abortions or birth defects in cattle. The virus has been detected in aborted calves in Switzerland, but there is not yet evidence that it caused the abortions. Authorities are monitoring pregnancies and calf births during the 2026–2027 calving season to better understand its possible effects.
- Shamonda-like viruses were isolated from brain samples from 2 neurological horses in Switzerland, (LINK) and in blood samples from a neurological horse in France (LINK)



Key Takeaways for horse owners

1. **Equine herpesvirus (EHV) infections increased,** including an outbreak that caused abortions. Vaccination, good biosecurity and limiting horse movements during outbreaks remain important.
2. **Breathing problems remained common,** particularly equine asthma and strangles. Laboratory testing also found increasing levels of bacteria associated with respiratory infections.
3. **Digestive problems remained a major concern,** especially dental disease, stomach ulcers and colic. Laboratories diagnosed several serious intestinal problems, including blockages and twisted intestines.
4. **Uterine disease remained a concern in breeding mares**. Laboratory testing identified increasing bacterial detections and some antibiotic-resistant infections, highlighting the importance of accurate diagnosis before treatment.
5. **Emerging diseases require attention**. Equine infectious anemia and West Nile virus were reported in Western Canada, while vesicular stomatitis and New World screwworm affected horses in the United States. A newly identified virus, called “Shamonda-like virus” was detected in ruminants (cattle, sheep, goats) and horses in Europe.

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