Western Canadian Animal Health Network

WeCAHN EQUINE NETWORK OWNER SUMMARY

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. Data were sourced from Clinical Impressions Surveys completed by network practitioners, 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), and scan of equine surveillance reported by other sources or networks.



1) Interesting Cases

Two horses from the same barn, a 30-year-old Quarter Horse gelding and a 10-year-old Warmblood mare, developed sinus problems linked to diseased teeth. Both underwent dental extractions and sinus procedures, with the gelding's infection resolving after treatment. Veterinary dental examinations and imaging are important when investigating sinus disease.

In another case, six mares from a group of approximately 100 aborted within five days. Testing confirmed equine herpesvirus-1 (EHV-1) in a stillborn foal, although the mares appeared healthy. Veterinarians emphasized monitoring temperatures, restricting horse movements, strengthening biosecurity and reviewing vaccination practices.

A separate case involved a five-year-old Arabian mare from a facility experiencing a strangles outbreak. An initial negative test was followed by a suspect result before travel, despite a normal examination. Veterinarians recommended repeat testing to clarify infection status before moving the horse.

Finally, pre-breeding testing in four mares identified bacteria that do not necessarily cause uterine disease. Veterinarians emphasized interpreting laboratory results alongside signs of inflammation and reproductive history to avoid unnecessary antibiotic treatment. Careful sampling and non-antibiotic uterine lavage products were also discussed.

2) Syndromic and Laboratory Surveillance

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

Equine herpesvirus (EHV) infections increased in early 2026, while strangles remained persistent but stable. Equine influenza and Potomac horse fever showed no sustained increases, and West Nile virus reports decreased.

Respiratory disease remained common, particularly equine asthma, which stabilized or decreased in Q2 2026. Strangles persisted, while detections of *Streptococcus equi* subsp. *zooepidemicus,* a bacterium associated with respiratory infections, increased.

Digestive problems remained common, especially dental disease, stomach ulcers and colic. Serious intestinal problems were prominent in laboratory findings, while *Enterococcus faecalis* detections increased and foal diarrhea and intestinal parasite reports decreased.

Uterine infections remained the main reproductive concern, while abortions were generally uncommon and stable. Detections of *Arcanobacterium hippocoleae* increased, and confirmed cases included an EHV-1 abortion and an antibiotic-resistant *Streptococcus equi* subsp. *zooepidemicus* placental infection.

Neurological problems were mainly associated with injuries, stringhalt, wobbler syndrome and head shaking. EHV-associated neurological disease increased in early 2026 before stabilizing, while equine protozoal myeloencephalitis (EPM) remained stable and West Nile virus reports decreased.

Unexplained fever and swollen lymph nodes remained common, while reported bloodstream infections and cancers decreased. Laboratory detections of *Anaplasma phagocytophilum* and *Streptococcus pluranimalium* increased, and *Salmonella* infections were confirmed in two newborn foals.



3) Scan of emerging and important diseases

Emerging and Important Equine Diseases – Q2 2026

- **Equine infectious anemia (EIA)** equine dashboard. Three cases were reported in Western Canada between April and September 2026: one each in Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia. Two were detected through routine testing, while the BC case involved a sick horse imported from Alberta.

- **West Nile virus (WNV)** LINK**.** Six equine cases were reported: three in Alberta, two in Saskatchewan and one in Manitoba, with none in BC. Manitoba also recorded substantial activity in birds and mosquitoes, highlighting continued circulation of the virus.

- **Strangles, Potomac horse fever and EHV-1 (**LINK**).** Alberta reported seven strangles cases between April and August 2026, along with one Potomac horse fever case and one EHV-1 abortion. These findings highlight ongoing infectious disease activity in the province.

- **Vesicular stomatitis virus (VSV)** Sept 3, 2026, Situation Report . By late September 2026, the United States reported 46 affected premises in Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico, including 43 involving only horses. The disease remained an important emerging concern in the southwestern United States.

- **New World screwworm** screwworm.gov. This parasite continued spreading in Mexico, with only two states remaining free of reported cases. Recent detections involving horses in Texas and New Mexico raised concerns about illegal horse movements ahead of winter.

- **Shamonda-like virus** beaconbio.org. A newly identified virus spread among dairy cattle in several European countries, causing fever, diarrhea and reduced milk production. The virus was also detected in three horses with neurological disease in Switzerland and France, although its role in causing illness remains uncertain.





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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