Disease Background
Equine Herpes Virus (EHV-1) infection in horses can cause respiratory disease, abortion in mares, neonatal foal death, and neurological disease. The virus is not transmissible to humans. The neurological form of the disease is known as Equine Herpes Myeloencephalopathy (EHM). EHM is most often due to the neuropathogenic strain of EHV-1, but may occasionally be caused by the non-neuropathogenic strain of virus.

EHV-1 is easily spread and typically has an incubation period between 2-10 days. Respiratory shedding of the virus generally occurs for 7-10 days, but may persist longer in infected horses. For this reason, a 21 day isolation period of confirmed positive EHM cases is recommended. Similar to herpes viruses in other species, the latent form of EHV-1 can reactivate at a later date, but generally with a low viral load posing a low risk of infecting other horses.

February 2016– Riverside County\(^1,2\)
- A 14 year-old polo mare, in Riverside County, displaying acute onset neurologic signs was euthanized on Sunday, February 7, 2016. The necropsy results from the California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory on February 9\(^{th}\), confirmed the non-neuropathogenic strain of EHV-1. Seventy horses were exposed.

January 2016– Los Angeles County\(^1,2\)
- A draft cross gelding displaying neurologic signs was confirmed positive for the non-neuropathogenic strain of EHV-1. The gelding recovered.

June 2015– Riverside County
- A 12 year old Quarter Horse gelding displaying neurologic signs and a 12 year old mule displaying a cough, originating from Riverside County, were confirmed positive for the non-neuropathogenic strain of EHV-1. Both animals attended Mule Days in Bishop, CA, from May 17-26, 2015. Both animals recovered.
- An exposed eight year old Quarter Horse gelding on the premises exhibiting a high fever and severe hind limb incoordination was confirmed positive for the neuropathogenic strain of EHV-1. His condition deteriorated and he was euthanized. No additional cases were confirmed.

June 2015– San Joaquin County\(^1\)
- A 13 year old Quarter Horse mare residing in San Joaquin County displaying severe neurologic signs was confirmed positive for EHM. This mare was exposed to two cohort mules after they arrived home from Mule Days in Bishop, CA from May 17-26, 2015. The mare was euthanized.

February 2015– Monterey County\(^1,2\)
- A 14 year old Quarter Horse gelding in Monterey County, displaying hind limb ataxia and an inability to urinate and defecate was confirmed positive for the non-neuropathogenic strain of EHV-1. The horse recovered.

April 2014– Santa Barbara County\(^2\)
- A seven year old Quarter Horse mare displaying mild neurologic signs uncharacteristic of EHM, specifically vestibular signs, abnormal prehension, and hypermetria of the right front for limb was confirmed positive for the non-neuropathogenic strain of EHV-1.
- Based on the low viral load and atypical clinical signs, it is possible that EHV-1 is not the cause of disease in this horse. Out of an abundance of caution, the horse was classified as case of EHM by CDFA and was isolated under quarantine. The horse successfully recovered.

February 2014– San Diego & Los Angeles County\(^1,2\)
- A three year old Thoroughbred racehorse filly in San Diego County displaying ataxia and a three year old Thoroughbred racehorse colt at Santa Anita Park displaying a fever. Both horses recovered.
- Laboratory results confirmed the non-neuropathogenic strain of EHV-1 in samples from both horses.
results confirmed the neuropathogenic strain of EHV-1.

March 2013
Los Angeles County

- A neurologic horse at Santa Anita Park was euthanized. Necropsy results confirmed Equine EHM based on finding the neuropathogenic strain of EHV-1.

San Diego County

- A Warmblood stallion displaying mild neurologic signs was confirmed positive for the non-neuropathogenic strain of EHV-1. The horse recovered.

Santa Barbara County

- A Welsh cross gelding displaying neuropathogenic strain EHV-1. The horse recovered.
- The confirmed horse participated in the HITS Thermal Horse Show in March 2013.

March 2012- Monterey (2), San Diego (1) & Los Angeles Counties (1)

- Four horses displaying neurologic signs were confirmed positive for the non-neuropathogenic strain of EHV-1.
- All four horses participated in the HITS Thermal Horse show March 5-11, 2012.

January 2012
Riverside County

- On a large multi-discipline facility, one positive case was confirmed for the neuropathogenic strain of EHV-1. The positive horse was euthanized on January 23, 2012.

Orange County

- On a large multi-discipline facility 16 cases were confirmed positive for the neuropathogenic strain of EHV-1.
- One confirmed case displayed neurologic signs and all others displayed compatible clinical signs such as fever, nasal discharge, and/limb edema.

September 2011
Tuolumne County

- Eight horses confirmed positive for the neuropathogenic strain of EHV-1 on the index Tuolumne county premises.
- Six with neurologic signs, two with fever only. One of the eight confirmed positive cases was euthanized.
- Two additional confirmed positive horses on a San Joaquin secondary exposed premises. Both horses were exposed to the virus while visiting the Tuolumne county index premises.

Sonoma County

- Single Sonoma County premises affected with three horses confirmed positive for neuropathogenic strain of EHV-1. One neurologic and two febrile only, the neurologic horse died.

May 2011

- Four hundred horses exposed to neuropathogenic strain of EHV-1 at the National Cutting Horse Association (NCHA) Western National Championship held in Ogden, Utah April 30-May 8, 2011.
- All 54 California exposed horses were isolated, temperature monitored twice daily and observed for clinical signs of disease.
- Twenty-two California horses were confirmed positive for the neuropathogenic strain of EHV-1. Positive horses resided on 14 premises in 12 counties.
- Eight displayed neurologic signs, 13 with fevers only and one with respiratory signs only.

1All horses on the premises were monitored and no additional horses developed clinical signs.
2There were no epidemiological links to any other previous CA EHV-1 outbreaks.

Reportable Disease Alert
Equine Herpes Myeloencephalopathy virus is a reportable disease (pursuant to §9101 of the California FAC, Title 3 California CR §797 and Title 9 CFR §161.4(f)) and must be reported within two days of discovery. If your horse is exhibiting clinical signs consistent with EHM please contact your private practitioner or CDFA officials.

Reportable Disease List

Animal Health and Food Safety Services
Animal Health Branch
Headquarters - (916) 900-5002
Redding District - (530) 225-2140
Modesto District - (209) 491-9350
Tulare District - (559) 685-3500
Ontario District - (909) 947-4462
USDA-APHIS-VS - (916) 854-3950 or (877) 741-3690

For more information, please click the following:
Animal Health Branch
CDFA Equine Health Information and Resources
Hand Washing Why, When, How, and with What?