

HEALTH ALERT

Equine Coronavirus



There have been confirmed cases of equine coronavirus in the area and the staff at Starwood Equine team would like to remind horse owners of the importance of practicing proper biosecurity. This virus is spread through contaminated feces and highly contagious. While you cannot eliminate the risk, you can reduce it by following our biosecurity tips.

What is equine coronavirus ECoV?

The ECoV is a species-specific member of the coronavirus family, once a horse ingests ECoV, the virus appears to travel to the small intestine, where it attaches to specific receptors on intestinal cells. From there, the virus particle fuses with the host's cell and replicates. Loss of epithelial cells results in malabsorption and maldigestion of nutrients and acute diarrhea.

Transmission

Coronavirus is spread when feces from an infected horse is ingested by another horse (fecal-oral transmission). The virus can also be transmitted when horses make oral contact with surfaces or objects that are contaminated with infected feces. Stalls, muck forks, manure spreaders, thermometers, hands, and clothing are common fomites (objects or materials that carry infection). Coronavirus is most commonly diagnosed in the winter months.

The incubation period is 2-4 days and infected horses can shed ECoV up to 14 days.

Clinical Signs & Symptoms

- Laying down frequently
- Diarrhea (may or may not be present)
- Low white blood cell count
- Fever up to 105° F (40.5° C)
- Lack of appetite
- Depression
- Mild colic

Diagnoses:

Diagnosis is made by a veterinarian submitting samples for PCR (polymerase chain reaction) tests of a fecal sample.

Prognosis & Treatment:

Horses that do develop clinical signs most often respond to basic supportive care, usually involving fluids and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as phenylbutazone or flunixin meglumine. It's uncommon for horses to die from the disease.

GENERAL CONSEJOS DE BIOSEGURIDAD



Call your veterinarian for horses with a temperature higher than 102°F. Any horse with a fever and no evidence of respiratory illness may have ECoV and feces may be infected.

- Reduce movement of all horses onto, off, and within the property until all affected horses have cleared their testing protocols.
- Keep affected horses in isolation stalls. If isolation is not an option, minimize nose to nose contact as much as possible and keep horses in their stalls/paddocks to reduce environmental contamination.
- Handle affected horses last. This includes grooming, mucking, and petting.
- Clean the stalls/paddocks of affected horses **LAST** with separate pitchforks.
- Do not allow affected horses to share items as they may transmit the virus. This includes water troughs, feed buckets, tack, halters and lead ropes, blankets and pads, and grooming supplies, etc.
- Use caution when handling the affected horses every time. Cover your face, wear gloves, and wash hands thoroughly using a disinfectant after contact.
- In certain situations, a foot bath may be recommended. Use 1:10 bleach dilution for a foot bath and a separate pair of muck boots for each sick horse. Alternatively, you could use a separate pair of disposable plastic boots for each sick horse.
- Dispose of manure where it cannot contaminate pastures, paddocks or drinking water.
- A diluted bleach solution is effective in inactivating equine coronavirus. When cleaning surfaces that may be contaminated with feces, clean the surface first to remove all traces of organic matter, then disinfect.
- When using bleach, first be sure to remove all dirt and manure. Then disinfect with a 3% chlorine bleach solution (add 3 gallons of bleach to 2 gallons of water, mix thoroughly).