Equine Herpes Virus Outbreak in the Southwestern USA - Guidance provided by:

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As many of us in the horse community are aware, there has been a regional outbreak of the neurological form of Equine Herpes Virus (aka rhino virus) in the southwestern USA at a large equestrian competition. As we come into the spring months and we, thankfully, get back into a more regular horse show schedule, it is important to consider the risks of viral infections in our horses. Respiratory transmissible viruses such as Equine Influenza Virus (EIV) and Equine Herpes Virus (EHV) are of particular concern. While we have not seen any significant uptick in the neurological form of EHV in our population of horses in Manitoba this year, we have seen Equine Influenza and non-neurological EHV. Some general precautions and preventative care can help to decrease the risk for our horses. Vaccination against EIV and EHV1,4 are an important and effective means to minimize risk of serious illness and are believed to decrease the risk (but not eliminate) of the neurological form of EHV as well. When preparing for travel to horse shows, taking daily temperature reading prior to, during and returning from horse shows can help to catch infections early and allow to best treatment options. Any horse with a temperature over 38.5 C should be examined by a veterinarian for advice before transport or movement. Avoid sharing feed, water, buckets, pails and other items between horses and particularly between different groups/stables of horses. Practice good hand hygiene and avoid horse nose to nose contact whenever possible. If you notice your horse is having trouble maintaining their balance, unable to get up normally, having difficulty urinating or seems weak in the hind end +/- depression or fever, notify you veterinarian right away or contact the show veterinarian (if applicable). Neurological form of EHV does not have a cure. There are some treatment options available, but they have incomplete success. Prevention and avoiding contact with the virus are the best means to avoid your horse becoming sick. EC and FEI require horses entering show grounds to be vaccinated with an EHV and EIV vaccine at least 2 weeks prior to competition and all events are encouraged to follow this protocol as well.