

Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA)

Prevention is the Only Cure

Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) is a potentially fatal viral disease affecting horses and other members of the equid family. There is no cure for EIA. Horses testing positive for EIA require humane euthanasia or lifelong quarantine. Animals infected with EIA remain lifelong carriers of the virus and can be a source of infection for other susceptible animals.

EIA is a reportable disease under The Health of Animals Act and must be reported to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). There is no human health risk associated with EIA.



Transmission

- EIA is most commonly transmitted by contaminated blood from one animal to another.
- Transmission may occur via blood transfusion or blood-contaminated needles or instruments.
- Biting insects such as horse flies, stable flies, and deer flies contribute in disease spread.
- The virus may be transmitted through the semen of an infected stallion. Foals can be infected before birth.

Clinical Signs of EIA

Fever	Weight loss
Anemia	Swelling in limbs
General weakness	Intermittent fever
Jaundice	Anorexia
Icterus	Bleeding under tongue and eye
Sweating	Loss of co-ordination
Rapid breathing	Colic
Abortion	Decreased platelet numbers

Forms of Equine Infectious Anemia

- **Acute** - One to two weeks after first exposure. Antibodies are not immediately produced and anemia is not present at this stage. The virus is active, multiplying and damaging the immune system and other organs.
- **Chronic** – Classic signs of EIA, including fever, depression, weight loss, anemia and petechial hemorrhages on the mucous membrane, are seen at this stage.
- **Inapparent** – Within a one year period, many horses begin to control infection and show no clinical signs. Inapparent carriers are infected for life and are a potential source of infection for other horses.

Risk Factors

- exposure/proximity (within 200 metres) to EIA positive horses or regions where EIA outbreaks have been identified
- stabling or pasture environments that have a steady influx of untested horses
- exposure to horses at shows, sales or events, especially where basic health requirements are not enforced and verification of a current negative test is not required
- pasturing horses in swampy areas and where horses have not been regularly tested for EIA

Biosecurity Tips for EIA

- Use strict hygiene practices when vaccinating or collecting blood samples from equines. For example, wear latex gloves.
- Do not use the same needle on more than one equine. Use disposable needles and syringes.
- Test all horses for EIA annually (every spring before fly season begins).
- Test any new horse before bringing on to your premises.
- If your horse frequently travels to shows or other high equine traffic areas, consider testing twice a year, or more regularly (every 4 – 6 months) if animal has frequent contact with outside horses, or lives or travels in geographic regions known for EIA outbreaks (talk to your veterinarian for input and advice on any questions regarding risks).
- Implement insect control measures such as insecticide spray, smudges, flysheets and masks, and screens and fans to deter biting flies. Remove standing water, which is a breeding habitat for insects.
- Keep stable areas dry and clean.
- Avoid proximity/exposure to EIA positive horses. These may include inapparent carriers and actively infected horses that may never have been tested.
- Clean and disinfect medical and dental equipment before using on another horse.

Protect and Prevent EIA at Equine Stables, Events, and Sales

- All farm, stable and arena operators, auction marts and sales should require that all horses on the premises have a current (within six months) negative EIA test certificate.
- A current negative EIA test certificate should also be a requirement for new boarders and participants in any hosted events where horses are gathered together.
- It is strongly recommended that organizers of horse shows, racetracks, rodeos and other equine events require entrants to provide a current negative EIA test certificate.
- Maintain as much distance as possible between different groups of horses.
- Limit standing water to reduce insect breeding and use other fly control measures such as sprays, sheets, masks and boots.

Other Sources

[Canadian Food Inspection Agency](#)
[Manitoba Agriculture](#)
[Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association \(MVMA\)](#)
[Saskatchewan Horse Federation](#)
[Government of Saskatchewan](#)
[MVMA](#)

**There are no vaccines available in Canada for prevention of EIA.
Prevention is accomplished by regular testing for EIA by horse owners.**