



WHAT'S UP DOC?

JULY 2017

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LICENSE, REGISTRATION, **COGGINS!**

In 2017 Weld County has had multiple confirmed cases of Equine Infectious Anemia. The authorities were able to trace back the infected horses to one person. Locally, many organizations are increasing the precautions taken in groups of horses. Everyone should Coggins test their horses for EIA. This simple, reliable, inexpensive and quick blood test helps the biosecurity of the horse world. Anyone who transports their horses to a show, or changes boarding facilities are usually required to test their horses for Equine Infectious Anemia, or EIA. Horses traveling across state lines or out of the country are also required to have a current Coggins test. Depending on the destination, a Coggins test may only be good for six months or up to one year. It is always a good idea to check the specific requirements for your state or country of destination.

EIA affects horses, mules, and donkeys. This disease is most common along the gulf coast and is sometimes called "swamp fever". Horses that are affected are called "swampers". There are three different sets of symptoms that can occur with an infected horse.



- Indicators of a short term infection are fever, depression, and no appetite. These non-descript symptoms are hard to diagnose because a horse will not test positive for EIA for six or more weeks. Approximately 1/3 of these horses will die within a month.
- Long term infected horses will have intermittent symptoms of the acute horse as well as general weight loss, anemia and swelling along the belly and legs.
- The asymptomatic horse will rarely show any signs of the virus, but will test positive on the Coggins test. Prolonged or intense periods of stress can induce EIA positive horses to show symptoms. These horses remain a "reservoir of infection" for life.

EIA has not been eradicated in the United States, so any time your horse is in an area with biting flies your horse is at risk for contracting EIA. Horses are infected via blood-sucking insects, or blood-contaminated needles or instruments. The Coggins test is the only way to monitor and control this disease. Testing is important because seemingly healthy horses, with no obvious symptoms, can be carriers of the disease. A majority of the horses that tested positive were asymptomatic.

What is the Coggins test? The test is a blood sample that is sent from your veterinarian to a state approved lab. Your veterinarian will include paperwork with the blood to identify the horse attached to the blood sample with information like markings, brands, scars and whirls. The lab searches for antibodies in the blood that would be present after being exposed to EIA. The Coggins test acquired its name from Dr. Leroy Coggins who developed the Coggins test. The USDA approved the Coggins test in 1973. Since its development over 40 years ago, the percentage of positive horses has decreased from 4% in 1972 down to 0.002% in 2012.

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Horses should be tested annually for EIA or as recommended by your veterinarian, but many locations will have their own requirements to follow regarding testing for your horse. For many years prior to 1973, thousands of horses died from this disease that was running unchecked through the United States. By learning to understand how the disease was transmitted (either by re-used needles and surgical equipment or by biting flies) we have been able to get a firm grip on eliminating the virus. There is no vaccine to prevent the spread, but by careful understanding and updated testing requirements, we will hopefully one day eradicate this deadly disease.

Meet Our New Associate

Veterinarian:

Jody Morris, D.V.M.

Jody was born and raised in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Her parents knew she would never cease to admire horses when they caught her sneaking into her neighbor's barn just to be around them. Her neighbors agreed to give her riding lessons (so they'd at least be able to monitor her when she was around) and there was no turning back from there. Her passion for horses grew through family trail rides in the Rockies and riding at home in the Shenandoah Valley with her mom. Her passion for animals did not stop at horses, however, as she has always been accustomed to having companion animals around the house.

After high school she got her license as a Veterinary Technician and her experiences there convinced her to pursue a career as a Veterinarian. Jody attended Virginia Tech where she completed a Bachelors in Animal Science with an Equine Emphasis. While as an undergraduate, Jody worked at the mare center on campus as well as was involved in poultry research. She then proceeded to obtain her degree in Veterinary Medicine at Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine. During her veterinary education, she worked as an after-hours clinical pathology technician for the teaching hospital and focused her track on food animal and equine medicine.

When not immersed in the veterinary world, Jody enjoys spending time outside hiking, fishing and riding for pleasure. She hopes to hike all the Fourteener mountains in Colorado eventually; she has only done Grays and Torreys Peaks but is eager for more adventures throughout the next year. Additionally, she plans to learn to ski over the winter season.

