



Governor Ted Strickland
Lieutenant Governor Lee Fisher
Director Robert J. Boggs

Office of Communication
8995 East Main Street, Reynoldsburg, OH 43068
Phone: 614-752-9817 • Fax: 614-466-7754
www.agri.ohio.gov • communications@agri.ohio.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State Vet Works With Federal Partners to Trace Contagious Equine Metritis

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio (Jan. 23, 2009) - The Ohio Department of Agriculture is closely working with its partners at the U.S. Department of Agriculture to perform trace back investigations as part of the nationwide effort to locate, quarantine, test, and treat horses that may have been exposed to stallions that tested positive for contagious equine metritis (CEM). Quarter Horses and Paints are the main breeds affected by this national outbreak at this time. Currently, there are no known positives in Ohio horses.

CEM is a highly contagious venereal disease that affects horses and does not pose a threat to humans. It is spread through natural breeding, artificial insemination, or contaminated equipment. Potentially exposed horses are isolated and placed under quarantine while veterinarians take cultures and blood. The horses remain under quarantine until testing and treatment protocols are complete.

Ohio Department of Agriculture State Veterinarian Dr. Tony Forshey, USDA Area Veterinarian Dr. Sue Skorupski, and their respective teams are diligently working to locate all Ohio horses that may have been exposed to the infected stallions.

“Ohio horse owners board their horses not only in state, but in other areas around the country as well,” Forshey said. “Trace back investigations involve record reviews to identify exposed horses and to find their current locations, which can be a lengthy process. Once the horses are located and cultured, scientists from the department’s Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory will quickly move to perform tests.”

The Ohio Department of Agriculture’s Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory is one of only 16 USDA approved labs in the nation approved to conduct CEM testing.

Forshey and Skorupski advise horse owners and veterinarians to use biosecurity measures that will protect horses against the spread of CEM. Such measures include knowing the history of the horses they work with and maintaining strict hygiene when handling mares and stallions by using disposable gloves, changing gloves between horses, and thoroughly cleaning and disinfecting instruments and equipment between horses.

For more information on CEM, visit the USDA’s Web site at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/>.

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Media Contact: Kaleigh Frazier, Public Information Officer, 614-728-6211

