



The WeCAHN Equine Network held a quarterly virtual meeting on June 4th, 2026. Network members discussed animal health events from January to March, 2026. Veterinary practitioners, diagnosticians, veterinary college faculty, researchers, public veterinarians, and industry representatives attended the meeting. Data sources include Clinical Impressions Surveys completed by network practitioners, data shared by western veterinary diagnostic laboratories: Manitoba Veterinary Diagnostic Services (VDS) laboratory, Prairie Diagnostic Services (PDS) laboratory, and University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Services Unit (UCVM DSU), and equine surveillance reported by other sources or networks.

1) Interesting Cases



Several horses in Manitoba developed respiratory signs including fever, nasal discharge, and coughing, with increased detection of EHV-2, EHV-5, and *Streptococcus* species. Two horses developed severe lung disease, including one confirmed with Equine Multinodular Pulmonary Fibrosis (EMPF) linked to EHV-5. Similar cases were also reported in British Columbia and Prince Edward Island, and the trend will be monitored through Canadian equine surveillance networks.

A healthy 17-year-old Quarter Horse in Saskatchewan was found dead without prior signs of illness. Post-mortem examination found no obvious cause of death, and poisoning or accidental exposure to toxins were not suspected. A sudden arrhythmia (abnormal heart rhythm) was considered the most likely explanation.

In Saskatchewan, a 3-year-old Quarter Horse with an unknown parasite control history developed weight loss, digestive disease, and swelling of the limbs. Post-mortem examination confirmed intestinal blockage and severe intestinal damage caused by heavy infestation with cyathostomin larvae. An unusually mild winter along with the lack of a parasite control program were thought to be associated with early onset of heavy parasite burden leading to protein loss and swelling.



In Alberta, a 7-month-old Thoroughbred colt struggled with growth and development with digestive problems including drooling and gastric reflux after weaning. Examination confirmed severe stomach disease, an ulcer and narrowing of the small intestine, and post-mortem findings showed the condition had likely developed before weaning. Treatment with non-selective NSAIDs in early life was suspected as a risk factor for ulcer development.

A 26-year-old Quarter Horse in British Columbia developed sudden severe colic caused by a temporary blockage of the lower intestine. The blockage resolved during careful rectal examination, and the horse recovered completely within a few days.

A 23-year-old pony with several long-term health problems developed progressive respiratory disease. Post-mortem testing confirmed EMPF associated with EHV-5. Other horses on the property remained healthy. Reduced immunity due to cancer and prolonged corticosteroid treatment was discussed as a possible risk factor in this case.

High-importance infectious diseases: Equine herpesvirus remained an important disease and appeared **stable** to **increasing**, while influenza also remained **stable** overall. Strangles activity remained stable, although laboratory detections of *Streptococcus equi* exceeded normal levels in Manitoba. Potomac Horse Fever and Equine Protozoal Myeloencephalitis remained stable, and no cases of West Nile virus, EEE, WEE, EIA, or EVA were reported.

Respiratory disease: Upper and lower respiratory disease remained common and generally **stable** to **increasing**. Equine herpesvirus, *S. equi*, *equi* and *S. equi zooepidemicus* continued to be important causes of respiratory disease. Severe lung disease associated with EHV-5 also appeared to be increasing. Other laboratory detections remained within expected levels.

Digestive disease: Gastric ulcers, colic, and parasite-related disease remained common and were generally **stable**, although some types of colic and undifferentiated diarrhea appeared to be increasing. *Clostridium difficile*, *C. perfringens*, *Salmonella*, and *Rhodococcus equi* were identified in some foals with diarrhea. Most laboratory findings were within expected levels, and parasite-related intestinal disease remained uncommon. Strongyle infections remained stable.

Multisystemic disease: Fever of unknown origin and enlarged lymph nodes remained common, while lymphoma continued to be reported. *Staphylococcus haemolyticus* was detected occasionally, with no evidence of unusual activity.

Neurological disease: Neurologic disease remained **stable** overall, although neurologic disease associated with Equine herpesvirus appeared to be increasing. Equine Protozoal Myeloencephalitis remained **stable**, and laboratory diagnoses were uncommon.

Reproductive disease: Abortions remained uncommon and **stable**, while female reproductive tract disease continued to be reported. *Arcanobacterium hippocoleae*, *C. uterequi*, *S. equi zooepidemicus*, and *Trueperella pyogenes* remained within expected laboratory levels.

Skin disease: Allergic skin disease, sarcoids, and external parasites remained common and generally **stable**, although lice and tick reports appeared to be **increasing**. *C. pseudotuberculosis* and *Pantoea agglomerans* remained within expected laboratory levels.

Trauma and welfare: Dental problems and traumatic injuries, including fractures, remained common with no major changes. Frostbite was reported infrequently.

3) Scan of emerging and important diseases

Canada reported 37 cases of Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) between January and April 2026, with most cases occurring in Alberta and one in Manitoba. A large group of cases was linked to follow up testing on a single farm near Clearwater, Alberta.

One neurologic case of equine herpesvirus was reported in Ontario, while 6 strangles cases were reported in British Columbia and 17 Ontario. These findings indicate that contagious respiratory diseases continue to circulate in some regions and reinforce the importance of monitoring horses with respiratory signs.

Vesicular Stomatitis Virus continued to spread in the southwestern United States, with the latest case reported in New Mexico in May. The disease remains important because of its impact on livestock movement and trade; horse owners travelling to affected areas should stay informed about current disease activity.

New World Screwworm continued moving north through Mexico and was confirmed in Texas for the first time since 1966. Quarantine and animal movement restrictions were introduced in affected areas, and Canadian horse owners travelling south should remain aware of this emerging risk. No cases of HPAI have ever been detected in Canadian cattle, although poultry outbreaks continued in SK and AB. In the US, new cattle and poultry cases were reported, while no new human cases have been identified since 2024. Continued surveillance remains important because the virus is affecting multiple animal species.



4) Other updates

The use of SGLT2 inhibitors in performance horses continues to increase, but there is no established equine regulatory guidance or validated testing method in Canada. Horse owners competing under equestrian rules should be aware that substances prohibited by the **FEI** and **Equestrian Canada** may not be permitted in competition

Veterinarian takeaways

Respiratory illness was an important issue this quarter. Veterinarians reported more cases involving equine herpesvirus (EHV), including a serious lung disease linked to EHV-5. Strangles was also diagnosed in several provinces, reminding owners to watch for respiratory illness and work with their veterinarian to help reduce disease spread.

Several unusual digestive problems were identified. These included severe parasite infections, diarrhea in young foals caused by several different germs, stomach and intestinal ulcers in a weanling, and a rare intestinal condition in an older horse. These cases highlight the importance of early veterinary attention when horses develop digestive signs.

Several animal health threats continue to be monitored. Most Canadian cases of equine infectious anemia this quarter were linked to one investigation in Alberta. Canada remains free of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in cattle, but New World screwworm has reached Texas for the first time in decades and Vesicular Stomatitis Virus cases continue in the southwestern United States.

New challenges are emerging for the horse industry. Questions remain about the use of certain drugs like SGLT2 inhibitors in horses because regulations and testing methods are still being developed.

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