

Equine protozoal myeloencephalitis



What is equine protozoal myeloencephalitis?

- Infection of the central nervous system with protozoan parasites *Sarcocystis neurona* and *Neospora hughesi*
- Progressively debilitating disease
- Opossums shed infective sporocysts in their feces. Horses become infected by ingesting contaminated food or water.
- In <1% of cases, ingested sporocysts migrate into the bloodstream, cross the blood/brain barrier, and attack the nervous system.

What you can do to keep your horse healthy:

- Decrease stress
- Reduce exposure to opossum feces
- Feed horses in feeders and not on the ground
- Maintain separate fresh water sources
- Prevent wildlife access to where horses are housed
- Keep feed rooms and containers closed
- Clean up dropped grain

Signs

Gait abnormalities
Incoordination
Ataxia
Spasticity
Muscle atrophy
Lethargy
Behavioral changes

Transmission

Ingestion of feed or water
contaminated with
opossum feces

Treatment

- FDA-approved anticoccidial drug
- NSAIDs
- Corticosteroids, DMSO
- Vitamin E

**If your horse needs medical care, contact the Large Animal Clinic at (530) 752-1393.*



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