

February 1 Update: Horsemen at Sunland Park Racetrack Urged to Keep Up Good Work to Control EHV-1 Outbreak

(SUNLAND PARK, N.M.) – More than a week after the first case of Equine Herpes Virus-1 (EHV-1) was confirmed at Sunland Park Racetrack, horsemen and women at the track are being urged to continue basic biosecurity measures to end the outbreak, begin lifting quarantines, and return to racing as soon as possible.

New Mexico's acting state veterinarian Dr. Alexandra Eckhoff was among those who spoke to owners, trainers, and groomers who gathered on Feb. 1 for a pair of meetings – one in English, one in Spanish – hosted by racetrack officials.

Dr. Eckhoff urged horsemen and women to continue to:

- Wash their hands before and after working with a horse
- Disinfect their clothing and footwear with Lysol or a 10 percent bleach solution before and after working with a horse
- Wash and disinfect any items – feed/water buckets, grooming gear, saddles and other tack -- horses have touched or might touch
- Avoid walking through barns where they have no horses
- Take the temperature of their horse(s) twice a day, then record and report that information daily by order of the New Mexico Racing Commission. Fever is often the first indicator of EHV-1.

The Racing Commission last week said horsemen and women who failed to take and report the temperatures of their horse(s) risked being fined \$250 and/or having their license suspended.

In addition to state government's regulatory measures, Sunland Park has taken its own steps to control the potential spread of the virus. Racetrack officials installed a compliance officer last week to ensure that, among other things, men and women at the track were taking and accurately reporting their horses' body temperatures.

Samples taken from horses suspected of having the virus are being tested at New Mexico Department of Agriculture's (NMDA) Veterinary Diagnostic Services laboratory in Albuquerque. Officials note that the number of confirmed cases is less than two percent of the approximately 1,500 horses at the racetrack.

EHV-1 is contagious and spread via a horse's nasal secretions – either directly from horse to horse, or indirectly via human handlers, feed and water buckets, grooming gear, riding tack, and trailers. Unlike other forms of Equine Herpes Virus, EHV-1 can sometimes show itself neurologically.

“EHV-1 is not a death sentence for a horse,” Dr. Tim Hanosh, director of NMDA’s Veterinary Diagnostic Services lab, said. “Most horses will get over the fever. Some will develop minor neurological signs they can recover from. And unfortunately, a few will develop severe neurological problems they can’t recover from.”

Several barns at Sunland Park Racetrack remain under quarantine following the first EHV-1 confirmation Jan. 21. As an extra precaution, the Livestock Board on Jan. 22 established a broader quarantine perimeter that encircles Sunland Park Racetrack and three nearby horse-training centers (Frontera, Jovi, and Lazy S). People who removed their horses from any of these premises before quarantines were established are advised to contact their veterinarian.

The New Mexico Livestock Board is posting updates as they become available, detailing the number of confirmed cases at the racetrack and the barns under quarantine:

<https://www.nmlbonline.com/index.php?id=15>

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