

30 July 2015

CH-M-A and CH-M-YH, Fabiansebestyen and Mezőhegyes (HUN), September 2015

Some concerns have been raised by National Federations and athletes regarding the CH-M-A and CH-M-YH events due to take place in September 2015 in Fabiansebestyen and Mezőhegyes. These events are located in regions that have not been affected by EIA. Neighbouring regions in Hungary have also remained unaffected.

In light of the present situation, the location of the events as well as the measures in place to contain the EIA virus, the FEI considers the risk of infection to be low for horses participating in the forthcoming driving events in Fabiansebestyen and Mezőhegyes.

The positive cases identified in Hungary's national mandatory testing programme have concerned only leisure horses. Competition horses have not been affected.

There have been no new cases of EIA in Hungary since 30 June.

The FEI will continue to monitor the situation and provide additional information to National Federations should there be any changes.

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Further to the FEI Veterinary Department's previous communication (23 June 2015), updated information on the situation in Hungary can be found below.

A number of Equine Infectious Anaemia (EIA) cases occurred in Hungary earlier this year. A total of 12 horses have tested positive to EIA in Hungary during 2015. Regions affected by EIA are Veszprém and Vas in the west of the country, Pest and Szabolcs-Szatmár, located close to the Ukrainian border.

In March 2015, a diagnosis of EIA was made in a horse from Veszprém (HUN) that had been treated for an ethmoidal (nasal) haematoma in a veterinary clinic. The infected horse was euthanased.

All horses that had been in-contact with the infected horse were identified and traced back to five establishments. Four establishments had one in-contact horse, and one establishment had two in-contact horses. The horses on each of the establishments were quarantined and have been tested every 21 days for 90 days. To date, no further, in-contact horses have tested positive.

Unrelated to the above, five horses were found to be positive to EIA under Hungary's national mandatory testing programme. Four of these horses initially returned inconclusive results and were positive on re-test. All horses located within a 3km radius of the positive horses are undergoing testing every 21 days for 90 days as a precaution, and are under movement restrictions.

FEI Events in Hungary

The FEI is in constant communication with the Hungarian National Head Veterinarian and has analysed the risk of the disease in relation to the events planned in the country on an event-by-event basis.

Event organisers in Hungary must provide event details to the Hungarian animal health authorities. Official controls will take place at the events and horses may not enter event venues without appropriate documentation, including a laboratory test for EIA with results not older than 30 days.

EIA in Hungary

EIA can be found world-wide and in 2015, cases have been reported in a number of European countries, including Hungary.

Although Hungary has been free from EIA between 1965 and 2010, there have been 21 cases of the disease over the past five years. However, only one case had been identified this year prior to those described above.

It is mandatory to report all positive cases to the Hungarian Veterinary Authority, which will subsequently issue advice to stakeholders.

Regular, compulsory testing of horses for EIA takes place in Hungary to identify asymptomatic carriers of the disease and infected horses are euthanased. Testing of competition horses takes place annually and every three years for non-competition horses. This is a more stringent testing protocol than in other parts of Europe.

What is being done by Hungarian Authorities to control and prevent the spread of EIA?

In view of the outbreak, the Hungarian Veterinary Authority has imposed stricter regulations concerning the testing of horses for EIA. Restriction zones of three-kilometre radius have been implemented around stables where infected horses have been identified. The restriction zones will remain in place for a period of 90 days and all horses in these areas will undergo testing every three weeks.

What is Equine Infectious Anaemia?

Equine Infectious Anaemia (EIA) is a viral disease that can affect horses in two ways: they may suffer from an acute or a chronic manifestation of the disease. Once horses are infected by the EIA virus, they remain carriers for life and therefore serve as potential virus reservoirs.

What are the Clinical Signs?

Acutely affected horses develop a fever and the disease can be fatal. Horses suffering from the chronic form of the disease may show clinical signs such as a recurrent fever, anaemia, swellings and lethargy. Additionally, chronically infected horses may serve as persistent sources of the disease, despite appearing clinically healthy. These horses are known as “asymptomatic carriers”. Consequently, the legislation in many countries enforces the euthanasia of the infected horses.

How is EIA transmitted?

The disease can be transmitted in two ways:

1. Infected blood products – horses may be infected either following blood transfusions from other infected horses, or if hypodermic needles have been reused instead of being disposed of after initial use.
2. Flies – horses may develop the infection through bites of flies that have recently bitten an infected horse. These flies may only transmit the infection for very short periods of time.

EIA Diagnosis and Treatment?

EIA may be diagnosed on the basis of clinical signs, pathological lesions, serology and molecular methods. Coggins test, which is a laboratory-run blood test to diagnose EIA, may be performed on a suspected horse. There is unfortunately no treatment or vaccine available at this time for EIA.