

## **Potomac Horse Fever (equine monocytic ehrlichiosis, equine ehrlichial colitis, or acute equine diarrhea syndrome)**

### **Definition**

Potomac Horse Fever (PHF) is caused by the rickettsial organism *Neorickettsia risticii* (previously known as *Ehrlichia risticii*). The disease can affect any age, breed or sex of horse. PHF cases usually occur in summer and fall.

### **Clinical Signs**

Highly variable, including:

- Diarrhea (mild to severe)
- Fever --up to 107°F (41.6° C), depression, anorexia, lethargy
- Laminitis
- Mild colic
- Decreased abdominal sounds
- Edema of limbs and ventral body, prepuce of males
- Abortion (by transplacental transmission)

Note: Concurrent infections with *Salmonella* have been documented.

### **Incubation**

Approximately 1-3 weeks

### **Transmission**

Oral ingestion of trematodes present in aquatic insects (typically associated with horses housed on pastures around creeks and rivers; PHF can occur in animals housed in racetrack stalls as well).

Whole blood transfusion from an infected donor

Transplacental

Other modes of transmission are under investigation

Note: Affected horses are not considered to be contagious by natural contact with other horses.

### **Diagnostic Testing**

PCR (buffy coat of blood sample, and fecal sample)

IFA titers: (Results interpretation must be made in conjunction with laboratory personnel and PHF vaccination history)

### **Shedding Time of Organism Past Resolution of Clinical Signs**

Confirmed PHF cases are not considered contagious.

### **Environmental Persistence**

The organism is within aquatic insects and not known to be free in the environment.

**Specific Control and Treatment Measures**

Consider all diarrheic horses as contagious until proven otherwise.

Routine isolation and disinfection guidelines should be followed, including proper disposal of manure.

**Release of Animals from Isolation**

If PHF is the only cause of the illness, it is not considered a contagious disease, although any diarrheic horse should be isolated from other sick animals until normal feces is produced.

**Biosecurity Issues for Receiving Animals**

None

**Zoonotic Potential**

None known.