

Maine Horses Potentially Exposed to Contagious Disease  
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Agriculture

AUGUSTA—Maine State Veterinarian Dr. Don Hoenig today alerted horse owners and breeders to the potential exposure of their horses to Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM), a contagious venereal disease of horses. Currently, there are ten known stallions outside of Maine that have tested positive for CEM and that have potentially exposed hundreds of other horses to the disease, including seven mares in Maine.

CEM can be spread when horses are bred, or congenitally from mares to their foals. While natural breeding is more likely to spread the infection, horses involved in artificial breeding can also be exposed to CEM. Infected stallions seldom, if ever, show outward signs of infection, but may act as carriers of the disease. CEM may render mares infertile or may cause horses to spontaneously abort, however, the disease can be treated with antibiotics and disinfectants. There is no evidence that CEM affects humans.

To date, in addition to the seven mares in Maine, there are approximately 443 other potentially exposed horses in 45 other states. As potentially exposed horses are identified, they are placed under strict restrictions by state and federal animal health authorities, pending three consecutive negative test results and subsequent treatment. The Maine Department of Agriculture and USDA veterinarians have quarantined the seven exposed Maine mares and have begun testing. At this time, none of the potentially exposed Maine mares, nor those in other states, have tested positive for CEM. The CEM-positive stallion suspected of exposing the Maine mares is a nine-year-old Friesian named Nanning 374 and is currently stabled in Wisconsin.

For more information on the Maine situation, please call the Maine Department of Agriculture at 207-287-3701 to speak with either Dr. Hoenig or Dr. Beth McEvoy. For more information and regular updates on CEM, visit [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/hot\\_issues/cem/index.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/hot_issues/cem/index.shtml)