

## Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM)

### Current Outbreak

On December 15, 2008, the State of Kentucky detected a case of Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM) in a 16-year-old quarter horse stallion on premises in central Kentucky. The clinically healthy stallion was identified during routine testing for semen export.

As of May 28, a total of twenty one stallions and five mares have been confirmed positive for CEM.

*See later update below.*

### Hawaii Situation:

No infected or exposed horses have been traced to Hawaii. Hawaii is currently one of four States that have not had a positive or exposed trace to it. Practicing equine veterinarians in Hawaii are being provided updated information regarding infected and exposed stallions and mares. Quarantines are established to prevent the movement of horses, semen and embryos from infected and exposed horses.

**Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM) is a highly contagious venereal foreign animal disease** of horses caused by the bacteria, *Taylorella equigenitalis*. Transmission occurs during natural cover or artificial insemination breeding. The disease is not known to affect humans or other species of livestock.

Most cases involve non-clinical mares with a mild uterine inflammation. However, an acute infection can cause active inflammation of the endometrium that results in a mucoid vulvar discharge 10–14 days post breeding. Abortions due to CEM are rare. Mares infected during pregnancy can produce subclinical carrier foals. Asymptomatic mares can be infectious and remain carriers for several months. Stallions exhibit no clinical signs but can carry the organism on their external genitalia for an extended period of time.

Carrier mares and stallions act as a reservoir of *Taylorella*. Undetected mares and stallions are the source of the infection for disease outbreaks. Detection of the carrier state relies on isolation of *Taylorella equigenitalis* from urogenital swabs of the mare and stallion. Due to the organism's fastidious nature and slow growth characteristics, it is difficult to culture therefore requires multiple cultures over a period of one week. Serology is available to detect antibodies to CEM in mares. This test cannot be utilized in stallions, as detectable antibodies do not develop.

Mares and stallions with positive cultures for CEM can be successfully treated with appropriate antibiotics.

### Information/Updates:

Fact Sheet:

[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal\\_health/content/printable\\_version/fs\\_ahcem.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/content/printable_version/fs_ahcem.pdf)

May 28 update: [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/hot\\_issues/cem/index.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/hot_issues/cem/index.shtml)