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## **No Test, No Trailer** **Coggins Testing Explained**

In nearly all equine events where equids from different ranches are co-mingled, a Coggin's test is required to be performed by a veterinarian, and the horse owner or exhibitor is required to share the test results with event officials. This test is used to identify horses, mules, and donkeys infected with the Equine Infectious Anemia virus (EIA). This virus belongs to the same family as the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Similar to HIV, once a horse is infected with EIA, it remains so for life. Despite being recognized since the early 1900s, there are currently no effective treatments or vaccines.

Equine Infectious Anemia is an infectious, potentially fatal virus that affects the immune system of animals in the Equidae family. While some animals can carry the virus without showing symptoms, other horses will suffer very severe symptoms of the disease, including irregular heartbeats, swollen legs and abdomen, general weakness, anemia, a high fever, and even sudden death. A herd outbreak can lead to catastrophic consequences, which is why horse owners need to be diligent about testing for the disease.

The virus is spread between horses by biting insects, such as mosquitoes, horseflies, deer flies, or stable flies that have fed on an infected animal. This means a horse does not need to come into direct contact with an infected animal to contract this disease. Because flies are attracted to barns and other places that horses frequent, the virus can be quickly and easily transmitted from one horse to another.

An animal is tested by a veterinarian, who thoroughly examines the horse and performs a blood draw. The blood is submitted to an accredited laboratory, and subsequent results are shared with the owner and vet. Most horse shows and fairs require a negative Coggins test within the past twelve months.

The good news is that Equine Infectious Anemia is rare in the United States. There are around one and a half million horses tested annually, and there are between 50 and 120 positive animals. New cases have continued to decrease annually. However, it remains important to continue to monitor this disease to protect our healthy equine population. Responsible horse owners should test annually, especially if horses will be comingled with other horses.

When participating in equine events with horses, mules, or donkeys, it's also important to practice good biosecurity when returning home. Traveling animals should be quarantined for at

least two weeks before being reintroduced to the herd. The quarantine stall should be separated from resident horses to prevent direct contact between the quarantined horse, other horses, and people. To prevent potential spread of disease by vectors, such as biting flies, use appropriate control products, like fly spray, feed additives, and rodent control. Also, disinfect equipment and trailers upon returning home.

For more information or to learn more about livestock biosecurity, please contact Wendie Powell, Livestock Production Agent, (620) 378-2167, [wendiepowell@ksu.edu](mailto:wendiepowell@ksu.edu).

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