



## Welcome to the EDCC Newsletter

As of May, this year, the Equine Disease Communication Center (EDCC) is starting nine years of service to help protect the nation's horses from infectious diseases. Prior to 2015 there was no dedicated system in the horse industry to communicate the risk of diseases in North America. The EDCC's alert system provides real time information about a disease outbreak with the chief goal to counteract misinformation and assure the horse owners and veterinarians what is being done to decrease the disease risk.

As part of its mission, the EDCC is striving to be the universal source for infectious disease and biosecurity information for both owners and veterinarians. The website has owner factsheets, links to other accurate information and AAEP disease and vaccination guidelines. Much of the information is on downloadable PDF's or by

links to websites. We invite you to investigate the website beyond the alerts page.

We appreciate any suggestions to help improve EDCC's service to the industry.

Thank You,



*Nathaniel A. White II DVM, DACVS*  
Director-Equine Disease Communication Center

### **The EDCC Needs Your Support!**

Help us support the horse industry from infectious disease in North America.

<https://equinediseasecc.org/support-us>

## Cross-Sectional Survey of Horse Owners to Assess Their Knowledge and use of Biosecurity Practices for Equine Infectious Diseases in the United States



Biosecurity practices are essential to protect the United States horse industry from infectious disease outbreaks, but horse owner's level of knowledge and awareness of biosecurity is not known. That is why a survey was created to better understand the level of knowledge horse owners have about keeping their animals safe on their farms as well as traveling to events. The website-based survey, created by Dr. Nathaniel White, EDCC Director, and the American Association of Equine Practitioner's infectious disease committee, was distributed to horse owners across various breed and discipline organizations via email. Evaluation of the results included analysis with a cross-tabulation software to identify significant differences in biosecurity practices associated with horse use and location within the United States. Four areas in the United States were identified (Northeast, Midwest,

South and West), and horse use was classified as follows: Pleasure/Trail Riding, Lessons/ School, Western Show, English Show, Breeding, Farm/ Ranch, Retired, Racing and Driving.

A total of, 2,413 responses were received to the 24-question survey. Differences in biosecurity use and understanding were identified across horse-use categories and regions of the country, including differences in the availability of biosecurity plans, poor risk assessment for horses in close contact and suboptimal use of isolation to mitigate infectious disease. A large majority of owners make medical decisions for their horses, and veterinarians are the most trusted resource for medical information. Owners indicated that websites are the preferred way to receive educational information about diseases.

There are several biosecurity methods that owners can apply to benefit horse health and welfare. These include temperature monitoring, isolation of new horses at facilities, understanding the risks of horses commingling,, knowing the entry requirements such as vaccination and health certificates at events and and having a biosecurity plan for facilities and events where horses come into contact.

To view the full report, please visit <https://equinediseasecc.org/news/article/Horse-Owner-Biosecurity-for-Infectious-Diseases>

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## EDCC Completes a Survey of State Animal Health Officials (SAHOs)

State veterinarians (SAHOs) are responsible to regulate the importation and movement of animals into and within the state and to protect the animals within the state through regulatory disease control/eradication programs and emergency preparedness and response programs. In general terms, the SAHO is responsible for ensuring the health of the equid herd.

SAHOs collaborate with private practitioners and USDA federal veterinarians to prevent and respond to regulatory diseases, namely those which pose a significant public health, animal health, environmental health or economic impact. When the state veterinarian receives notification of a disease reportable in their state, from an attending veterinarian, their regulatory authority



is used to initiate infection control, which can include an official quarantine with required biosecurity measures to help prevent disease spread. The SAHO can then report the disease to the Equine Disease Communication Center (EDCC) through the online submission portal <https://equinediseasecc.org/report-a-disease> and an alert will be posted on the EDCC website as well as placed on the EDCC Facebook page.

Before 2015 information about disease outbreaks was not communicated nationally. In 2013-14 SAHOs working with horse owner organizations and veterinarians helped to create the EDCC which serves as an alert system for infectious diseases throughout North America. SAHOs now use the EDCC as the primary way to effectively disseminate timely and accurate disease information (see Figure 1).

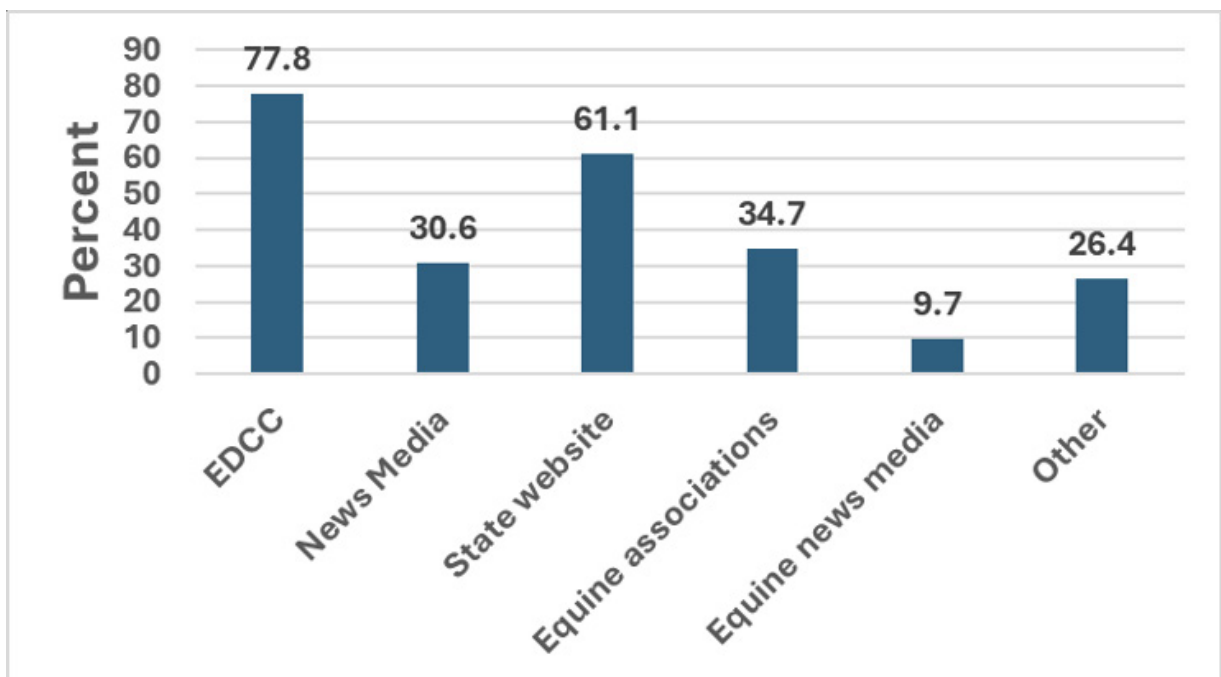
To identify the challenges SAHOs face in managing disease outbreaks, the EDCC completed a survey. A total of 72 survey responses from 45 states were received. Some of the SAHO responses to the survey included the following:

- When asked if their state has adequate resources to manage an equine outbreak, 50% said no and 38% indicated that training for equine diseases or biosecurity was not supplied in their state.
- 82% said veterinary practitioners submitted reportable diseases all or most of the time and 62% of SAHOs report cases to the EDCC

- The most common reasons for not submitting cases to the EDCC were 1) concerns about confidentiality, 2) it takes too much time and 3) complete information is not always available.
- Rumors in the equine community and a lack of understanding about disease risk were the top challenges when managing a disease outbreak; 88% said boarding stables require the most SAHO resources during an outbreak followed by horse shows and racetracks.
- SAHOs listed the greatest biosecurity need(s) for controlling equine infectious disease in their state was owner compliance and awareness.

It is clear from this survey as well as other EDCC surveys that both veterinarians and horse owners believe that compliance is lacking which potentially allows disease spread. Ultimately, the solution for disease prevention and response is education for all stakeholders to increase awareness of disease risk. Increased use of biosecurity practices are especially needed for horses traveling to facilities and events where there is increased horse-to-horse contact and proximity. Additionally, owners need to be educated about the critical role SAHOs play in protecting their horses.

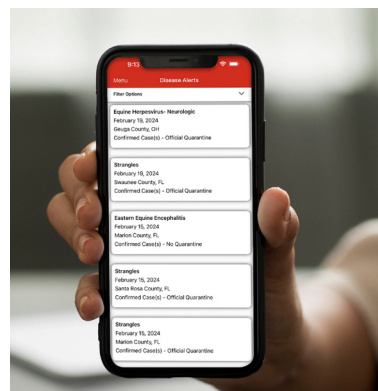
Figure 1: What are the most effective tools for sharing accurate and timely information regarding active outbreaks, general disease information, biosecurity information? (Select all that apply)



## EDCC 2023 Case Reports

In 2023, the EDCC received 813 cases from 41 states and 6 Provinces- the cases included Botulism, EEE, EVH-1 Abortion, EHV-Neurologic, EHV-1 Respiratory, EIA, Equine Influenza, EVA, Lyme Disease, Pigeon Fever, PHF, Rabies, Rhodococcus equi, Salmonellosis, Strangles, Vesicular Stomatitis, and West Nile Virus.

The most common disease reported are EHV, (including 71 EHV- Neuro cases reported), 242 cases of Strangles, 244 cases of West Nile Virus, and 78 cases of Equine Infectious Anemia.



## Frequently Asked Questions:

**Who can submit cases to the EDCC?** Submission of cases can only be made by veterinarians who have confirmed the diagnosis.

**Why aren't some cases you hear about from the media on the EDCC website?** Submitting cases to the EDCC is voluntary. EDCC seeks news of diseases in the media and attempts to get confirmed cases submitted to the website.

**Why doesn't the EDCC report a more specific outbreak location?** State animal health officials are not allowed to report an outbreak location beyond the county. Presenting a more specific location of private property or business risks liability for the premises and the EDCC. The EDCC can identify a location with permission.

**What is a reportable disease?** Each state has a list of diseases which are required to be reported by an attending veterinarian to the state veterinarian. SAHOs are encouraged to submit reportable diseases to the EDCC. Attending veterinarians are encouraged to submit reportable diseases that have been reported to or approved by the state veterinarian as well as non-reportable diseases.



## EDCC Submission Reminders for Veterinarians

- Submit as much information as possible
- Please use the website submission form
- We will use a media releases or email information sent to [edcc@aaep.org](mailto:edcc@aaep.org)
- Send a report when quarantines are released
- Alerts are available on the EDCC app
- Disease Facesheets can be downloaded from the website or delivered by email message from the phone app
- Links to AAEP disease guidelines are on the EDCC website

## EDCC Website and Social Media

The website continues to grow and increase traffic, since May 2015 the alerts page has been visited 1,096,973 times while all pages of the site has recorded 1,831,109 visits- the numbers are complete through March 1, 2024.

The EDCC currently has 18,731 Facebook Followers. We have 8,731 email subscribers.