**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.