

12 horses quarantined after two are euthanized in Jonesville

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Two horses have been euthanized and a Jonesville area farm is under state quarantine as a result of an equine neurologic disease called EHV-1 that was confirmed last week.

State Department of Agriculture veterinarians are keeping an eye on the remaining 12 horses on the farm, identified only as a private pasture. The 12 horses have shown no symptoms, according to veterinarian Susan Tanhauser of the North Florida Equine Veterinary Service, which treated the horses.

No other horses are in danger since neighboring properties do not have horses and the infected horses have not had contact with other horses for at least a month before showing symptoms, she said.

The first horse was treated for colic — or abdominal pain — shortly before taking a turn for the worse and had to be euthanized about two weeks ago. Although it showed signs of losing coordination and could not get up after going down, it did not raise suspicions because of its age at 27 or 28, Tanhauser said.

Then last Wednesday, about nine days later, a 10-year-old thoroughbred was treated after initially showing signs of colic. That

horse then had trouble getting up later that day. Because of its condition and suffering, it was euthanized last Thursday morning and the state veterinarian was contacted that day.

A preliminary test at the University of Florida confirmed EHV-1 that day, which was confirmed by the University of Kentucky late Friday. EHV-1 is suspected but not confirmed for the first horse.

The state placed the farm under a 28-day quarantine, meaning no other horses can be moved in or out.

The first horse had been a longtime resident of the Haile Plantation horse pasture, but had moved to the Jonesville farm about six weeks before its death. The current six Haile horses are in no danger since they are well past the quarantine date after the last contact with the first horse, Tanhauser said.

The cases are not related to an EHV-1 outbreak in Western states that resulted from an infectious horse at a horse show in Utah, according to Bill Jeter, state bureau chief of animal disease control.

Most horses are infected with the EHV-1 virus by age 2, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The virus remains in a latent stage in many horses but can flare up with stress and become infectious. It can lead to respiratory problems and abortion, but a mutant strain attacks the brain and spinal cord.

Jeter said horse owners should always take steps to avoid infection,

such as isolating new horses on a farm, not sharing water and feed buckets with other horses at horse shows and letting horses rest during long trips.

A vaccine is available, but Jeter said veterinarians are in disagreement about whether it will prevent the neurologic form of the disease.