

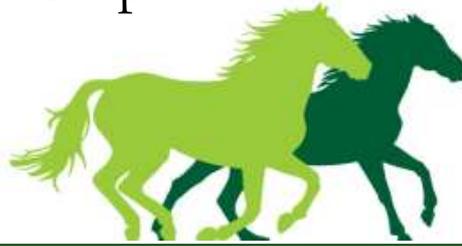
**Damory Veterinary  
Clinic**

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# Damory Veterinary Clinic

## Equine Department



### Equine Infectious Anaemia

Equine Infectious Anaemia (EIA) is also called Swamp Fever as it normally occurs in tropical countries. The UK has been free since the 1970s but an outbreak occurred in 2006 in Ireland.

#### **What causes it?**

EIA is a disease caused by a similar virus to HIV and attacks the horse's immune system. The virus is found in the bloodstream of infected or carrier horses.

#### **How does it spread?**

Humans are not affected by EIA but it spreads in a similar way to AIDS through contaminated blood or blood products.

The normal mechanism of spread is by biting insects (mainly stable and horse flies) ingesting contaminated blood from an infected horse and transferring the virus to a second horse when it bites for a blood meal.

The outbreak in Ireland in 2006 was linked to a contaminated plasma product that was given to a horse. Mares can pass the virus to their foals through their placenta.

#### **What are the clinical signs?**

These are very variable and include a severe fever, inappetance and weakness (due to anaemia/low red blood cell count). The disease is often fatal. Some horses will recover but remain persistently infected with the virus for life and hence a silent 'reservoir' of infection.

#### **Is there any treatment or vaccine?**

Unfortunately as the disease is caused by a virus there is limited therapy available and once diagnosed with the infection, affected horses are euthanased due to the risk of spreading the disease. There is no vaccine available.

**How is the disease diagnosed?**

A blood test called a Coggins test will detect infected horses.

**Should I be concerned?**

The horses in Wiltshire that tested positive to EIA on 20th January 2010 had recently been imported and were clinically well. DEFRA has acted very quickly and euthanased the two horses that tested positive and quarantined the other horses in-contact with them. They will be blood tested again in the future.

Additionally the biting flies that spread the disease (stable and horse flies) have little activity at this time of year, in this temperature. Midges are not thought to spread EIA.

There is no need to panic

Yes, we must be vigilant: The disease is notifiable, which means we must call DEFRA if we suspect EIA. However since the horses in Wiltshire were detected by routine post-import checks having come from Romania and then Belgium, it is re-assuring that the system works.

Do contact the practice if you have any further questions.