



Equine Herpes Virus Guidelines and Conditions

Equine Rhinopneumonitis

Equine rhinopneumonitis is caused by nine different equid herpesviruses (EHVs). The alpha herpesviruses EHV-1 and 4 are the commonest and most important clinically in domestic horses, causing several highly contagious conditions:

- Respiratory tract disease of varying severity (related to age and immunological status of the infected animal)
- Abortion
- Neurological dysfunction and disease

Latent infection and reactivation of infection under stress, with subsequent virus shedding, makes elimination of these viruses impossible.

Conditions for the Importation of Equids

Importers are informed that all horses (even if vaccinated against EHV) entering the islands must:

1. fill in form EquineImport01 and email the Veterinary Regulation Directorate (VRD) on karin.gatt@gov.mt, a minimum of 15 working days prior to commencement of travel to Malta for approval of import,
2. be quarantined, at their point of origin, or locally, for 21 days,
3. and PCR tested negative, 72 hours prior to departure from foreign country, or locally before release.
4. An international veterinary certificate attesting to the duration period of quarantine and the health status of the horse, and a PCR laboratory result are required.

Given the potential severity & distress caused by the disease, we strongly advise local horses owners to consult VRD, or their horse veterinarians, as to whether to vaccinate their animals.

The virus may be dormant in many seemingly healthy animals, and is activated by stress conditions, which should therefore be avoided, or minimised (e.g. transport, disruption of established social groups, inadequate diet, etc.). All newly purchased, or introduced animals, should be quarantined for a period of 21 days. This is a normal and recommended biosecurity measure, which will protect against sundry infectious diseases in any case.

24.03.2021