



Equine Influenza Alert

Equine influenza has been diagnosed this month on five premises in Munster and Leinster. Breeding stock, racehorses and competition horses are affected. Clinical signs such as coughing, nasal discharge, swollen glands and fever have been observed in both vaccinated and unvaccinated horses but the latter are worst affected. There has been an increase in influenza outbreaks in several countries in Europe recently and the first two Irish premises confirmed (a Thoroughbred stud farm and a show jumping yard), appear to have epidemiological links to the continent.

The virus has been typed by the OIE Reference Laboratory at the Irish Equine Centre. It belongs to Clade 1 of the Florida sublineage. Viruses of this clade predominate in North and South America but have not been identified in Ireland since early 2010. The virus circulating in Ireland at present appears to be more pathogenic than the clade 2 viruses circulating here in recent years i.e. the clinical signs are more severe. The virus can spread rapidly in a yard particularly if the horses are naïve or lack protective immunity. Clade 1 viruses are represented in some vaccines available in Ireland by A/eq/South Africa/04/2003 or A/eq/Ohio/2003, and booster vaccination is recommended for all horses that have not been vaccinated in the last six months.

Testing for equine influenza is provided free of charge by the Irish Equine Centre. This service is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Anyone with a query in relation to equine influenza should contact the IEC on +353 (0)45 866266 or email iec@irishequinecentre.ie.

18th January 2019