

Contagious Equine Metritis

-by Dr Walt Cook, DVM , Assistant State Veterinarian

Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM) is a highly contagious venereal disease of horses. The bacteria that causes the disease is carried by stallions, though they exhibit no signs. Mares typically fail to conceive when mated to an infected stallion. The disease, though common in Europe, was not believed to be established in the United States, but the USDA's National Veterinary Service Laboratory (NVSL) has confirmed 22 stallions as positive for *Taylorella equigenitalis* (none of these stallions are from Wyoming) in the last year.

To document the prevalence of Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM), USDA APHIS Veterinary Service has developed a CEM National Testing Project. The goal of this project is to test 3,000 stallions for CEM from around the United States. USDA/APHIS will pay the laboratory testing costs for this project (horse owners must pay their veterinarian to collect the sample). Participation in the project is voluntary.

Each state has sampling targets; the target for Wyoming is to sample 22 active breeding stallions. An active breeding stallion is one that was used for live breeding or artificial insemination in 2008 or 2009. There are some restrictions on which stallions are eligible for the testing and accredited veterinarians must have prior approval from the APHIS-VS Area Veterinarian in Charge or the Wyoming State Veterinarian prior to sampling any stallions under this project.

Sampling consists of having an accredited veterinarian take three swabs from each stallion to be tested. Stallions should not be on antibiotics at the time of sampling or within the previous 7 days.

Horse owners may be interested in this project so they can advertise that their stallion is CEM-free. They need to be aware that if any stallion tests positive he will be placed under quarantine and must undergo a treatment regimen and get retested to prove he is CEM-free. APHIS will pay all costs for this treatment and retesting for stallions that test positive under this project. No more than 50% of the

stallions or 20 stallions total from any one premise may be tested as part of this project.

If you would like a stallion tested, your veterinarian should contact the State Veterinarians office or the Cheyenne APHIS office to get approval to do the sampling and to get a copy of the full protocol.