

# Arabest Stud Farm

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Mr. and Mrs. W.J. Trapp  
W224 S6800 Guthrie Road  
Big Bend, Wisconsin 53103

Junction Highways ES & U

AB589  
25

January 2, 1995

Mr. Alvin Ott  
Room 318 North  
State Capital  
Box 8953  
Madison, Wi. 53708

*File - AB589*

*Sent AB589. GR  
1/25/96*

Dear Sir:

WE are writing to urge you to keep the Coggins test requirement for horses. While the incidence is not extremely high, the figures may also be misleading, in that almost all of the horses tested are those being shown in events that require such testing. There are many many horses not ever shown, or shown in small shows that do not require a coggins, and these can't be included in the figures now used.

The costs for a yearly test, for horses suspect, or coming into the state are very negligible; the costs when one has a horse that comes down with this disease, whether a companion horse breeding animal, show horse, or combination, is terrible.

We don't have a high incidence of many many diseases anymore, mostly due to inoculations, isolations and awareness of the possibilities of getting some of them, not only in animals, but in humans too. We hope that requiring a Coggins test for this particular one will be continued, so that we do not have outbreaks and can perhaps eradicate or at least keep the numbers getting the disease very low.

Sincerely,

*W. J. Trapp*

*Patricia M. Trapp*

Lamoine Peabody  
1524 Hwy. N  
Roberts, WI 54023-9716

January 17, 1996

*Sent AB589. LTR  
1-25*

Mr. Alvin Ott, Representative  
Chair Assembly Agriculture Committee  
P O Box 8952  
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Mr. Ott:

Please consider bringing AB589 up for a hearing. Horse people in this area are all for the bill.

I presented AB589 to the annual meeting of the Wisconsin Draft Horse & Mule Ass'n meeting. They gave a unanimous vote for the passing of the bill.

This association is a nonprofit organization that puts on 2 horse demonstrations of yesterday each year. In 1995 there were approximately 5,000 people attending at no charge to them, no entry charge, no parking fee. The associations Horse & Mule people do this work voluntarily for the public.

There were some members that did not come because of the EIA test. They refused to test because the horses across the fence from their horses were not tested. It is hurting the members taking part in this worth while entertainmant.

When a young boy or girl tells their mother, "this is great!" it makes our work all worth while. Their smiles are our reward.

I've attempted to inform the public about AB589 by sending attached article to approximately 60 newspapers.

At your May 17th hearing both Tom Howard & Don O'Connor agreed with you there was no reason not to eliminate the whole thing. AB589 does this without taking away the safeguards the horse industry needs.

Your excellent cooperation in the past and on this bill is truly appreciated. I hope some day I can vote for you as governor of our state.

*Continue to talk to  
Horse Industry*

*Congratulations  
your daughter has done you  
Proud.*

Cordially yours,

*Lamoine Peabody*

Lamoine Peabody  
1524 Hwy N  
Roberts, WI 54023  
Phone: 715/796-5542

**Views on EIA and Assembly Bill #589**  
(Copy of Assembly Bill #589 attached)

In 1995 we asked the Wisconsin legislature to cut the EIA testing to once a year, then to consider eliminating it for local events. Effective August 1st, 1995, horses only needed to be tested once a year. The 1995 test is good through January 1996. Your voice was heard and our good legislature responded. Proof that they listened is Assembly Bill #589, introduced October 2nd and has not come out of committee yet.

Please read carefully, this Bill; it is exactly what horse people want! A lot of you are asking yourself how you can help get this Bill passed. At this point I would say call or write your representatives and senator to express your desire for passage. Have your representative request a hearing on Assembly Bill #589. Watch this paper for a notice of the hearing. When the hearings are held, if you can't get to it, write the DATCP, P.O. Box 8911, Madison WI 53708 advising them you are for passage. This has the same effect as going to the hearing. Remember, they will only take comments during the hearing period . . . for or against.

Assembly Bill #589 does not change our real safe guards. The EIA test is needed to cross state lines. It does not change the DATCP power over sale barns to require an EIA test. It does not change the handling of EIA positive horses. It does not prevent you from demanding an EIA test when buying a horse. It does allow event sponsors to require an EIA test if they desire. It simply takes the red tape away of unnecessary paper work of record keeping and extra people checking at events. Also needless expense for the horse owners and for the state to enforce, plus it saves the state lab running over 30,000 needless tests.

No matter how I add up the plus' and minus' for these extra tests, I cannot justify requiring them. Going back the year before, all the Wisconsin 4-H kids having to have a test to go to the fair is a good example of the needlessness of the test. There were over 10,000 extra tests run and 12 less positive horses. Does this warrant the requirement for a test or is this a windfall of profit for some segment of our economy? Why burden the kids?

Nationally the past 3 years the percentage of positive horses to the number tested, has kept going down each year. Nationally there is less than 1% of horses in the U.S. that are positive based on 1,057,377 tested. There is only 1 state that is slightly over 1% (and that is 1.3%), and only 4 states over .5%. National in 1994 there was .18% and Wisconsin was .13%

EIA has been around approximately 150 years, the test a little over 20 years. Where is the need for needless laws?

Every state in the U.S. has a law that restricts movement of horses between states without a test! Enforce this law and get the bureaucracy out of Wisconsin law as Assembly Bill #589 does.

Views on EIA and Assembly Bill #589

Page 2

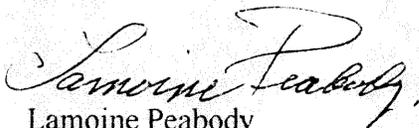
If our state DATCP wants to protect EIA from spreading within the state of Wisconsin there are things they can do! As a suggestion:

- Put out a bulletin to 4-H kids and horse people on how to keep it from spreading via horse and deer flies and needles.
- Be sure local Vets follow up on horses that show clinical signs of EIA in the early stages, (per Dr. O'Connor's Country Today's article)
- Have the state respond as Illinois does when a positive horse is found. Check all area horses!
- Go further in handling positive EIA horses. If it was a meat animal it would have to be euthanized.
- Put more enforcement of laws on horses coming into the state.

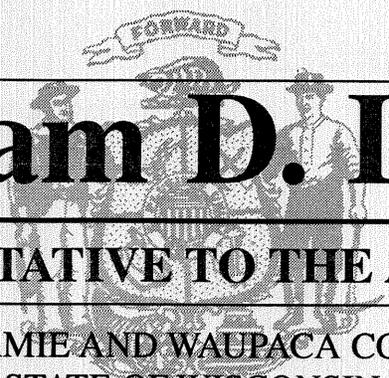
Unknown forces have made attempts in Wisconsin to increase EIA laws over the years. These forces have had various amounts of success in other states in addition to Wisconsin since 1990. Don't expect these forces to be sleeping on this law; get your opinion voiced. Remember less than one-fourth of the bills introduced are passed and made into law.

There is no vaccine for EIA! The "Coggins or Elisa" test does not prevent EIA! The test does tell you if your horse was infected the day the blood was drawn. If your horse was recently exposed, it would not show up on the test; also it could be exposed the next day. The test is accurate only when the circumstances are in place. Therefore, the test is not a good control measure. It could be if every Wisconsin horse was tested and a follow-up test in 2 months, and all positive horses euthanized. Then we would have to keep all illegal horses out of Wisconsin; some thing we have never been able to do! Laws do not protect your horse. Your common sense will. Pass Assembly #589!

Sincerely,



Lamoine Peabody  
1524 Hwy N  
Roberts, WI 54023  
(715)796-5542



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# William D. Lorge

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## REPRESENTATIVE TO THE ASSEMBLY

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January 24, 1996

OUTAGAMIE AND WAUPACA COUNTIES  
STATE OF WISCONSIN

Rep. Alvin Ott  
Chairman, Assembly Agriculture Committee  
Room 318 North, State Capitol  
Madison, WI 53708

*Sent AB 589. LTR  
1/25*

  
Dear Chairman Ott:

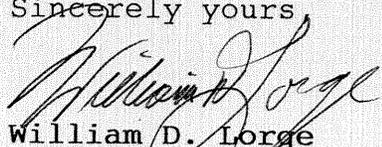
I am writing to request that your committee kindly hold a public hearing for Assembly Bill 589 which relates to testing for equine infectious anemia.

AB 589 is strongly supported throughout the state by thousands of horse owners. The bill is also supported by the Wisconsin Draft Horse and Mule Association.

Thank you for your consideration. Please schedule a public hearing for AB 589 as soon as possible. If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience.

With kindest best wishes, I am

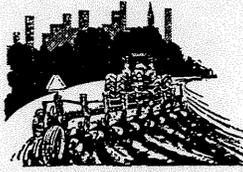
Sincerely yours,

  
William D. Lorge  
Representative to the Assembly  
Outagamie and Waupaca Counties  
State of Wisconsin

WDL/mm

CC: Rep. DuWayne Johnsrud  
Horse Owners

Chairman:  
Agriculture Committee



Member:  
Environment & Utilities  
Government Operations  
Natural Resources  
Rural Affairs

# Al Ott

State Representative • 3rd Assembly District

January 25, 1996

State Representative William Lorge  
302 North, State Capitol  
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL

Dear Representative *Bill* Lorge:

Thank you for your letter requesting a hearing on Assembly Bill 589 relating to testing for equine infectious anemia (EIA).

With all due respect, at this point I am not inclined to schedule a hearing on AB 589. As you may already know, Clearinghouse Rule 95-013 was submitted to the Legislature by the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) on April 19, 1995. This rule was not changed at all by the Legislature and it went into effect on August 1, 1995. CR 95-013 changed the EIA testing requirement from once every six months to once "during the calendar year in which it (the animal) is imported, sold, transferred or exhibited." CR 95-013 also created a "grace period" for EIA testing. An animal may be imported, sold, transferred or exhibited on or before January 31 of any calendar year if the animal tested negative for EIA during the preceding calendar year.

As I stated before, this rule change, which relaxed EIA testing requirements, just went into effect on August 1, 1995. I am not convinced that we should completely eliminate the EIA testing requirements only six months after the DATCP rule was relaxed.

Also, there is not unanimous support for AB 589 among the horse industry. While I have received a letter stating that AB 589 is supported by the Wisconsin Draft Horse and Mule Association, I have also received a letter from the Wisconsin State Horse Council stating their opposition to AB 589.

In the future, there may or may not be an opportunity to eliminate EIA testing if the number of positive tests drops to zero in some year. Dr. Tom Howard, State Veterinarian, has informed me that he is willing to keep a continuing dialogue going with representatives of Wisconsin's horse industry regarding the status of EIA testing requirements.

Page 2

Thank you again for contacting me. I hope this letter is helpful in understanding my position on AB 589. Please feel free to contact me again if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,



Alvin R. Ott  
State Representative  
3rd Assembly District

ARO:kjm

cc: Horse Owners  
Dr. Tom Howard, DATCP  
Scott Froehlke, Froehlke Government Relations

Russell De Boer  
2767-200th Ave  
Emerald River  
54012  
196

R.L.O.

Sent AB 589. LTR  
4/25/96

Representative Ott  
P.O. Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53708

I would appreciate it very much if you would schedule Assembly Bill #589 for a hearing. We would like to get this Bill passed. It is good for the horse industry, and I am for it.

Cordially yours,

January, 1996

Sent  
AB 589. CRT  
1/25/96

Representative Ott  
P.O. Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53708

I would appreciate it very much if you would schedule Assembly Bill #589 for a hearing. We would like to get this Bill passed. It is good for the horse industry, and I am for it.

Cordially yours,

John Weiss  
2532 80<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Woodville Wis  
54028

January, 1996

Rec'd  
1-18-96

Sent AB589. LTR  
1/25/96

Representative Ott  
P.O. Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53708

I would appreciate it very much if you would schedule Assembly Bill #589 for a hearing. We would like to get this Bill passed. It is good for the horse industry, and I am for it.

Cordially yours,

John R. Reis  
Reis Belgians  
730-230th st.  
Baldwin, wis.  
54002

January 20, 1996

Sent AB 589. LTK  
1-25-96

Assemblyman Ott  
Dept of Agric  
Madison, 53708

Dear Sir,

Hope you can help when Assembly Bill # 589  
when it is presented for hearing, and  
hopefully for passage. I am in favor of this  
bill which will more sensibly regulate  
Coggins testing, and eliminate some unnecessary  
cost.

I am a horse owner who uses horses for farm  
work, and for occasional sleigh rides and  
parades. There has been so much confusion  
about testing for EDA, and again we  
would certainly see this simplified if Bill 589  
is passed.

Sincerely,  
Ed L Hanson  
2294 107<sup>th</sup> av  
Baldwin, Wis.

Melvin J. Raska  
66 240th St.  
New Richmond, WI 54017

Rec'd 1-26-96

96

Sent AB589. CTR  
on 1-29-96

Representative Ott  
P.O. Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53708

I would appreciate it very much if you would schedule Assembly Bill #589 for a hearing. We would like to get this Bill passed. It is good for the horse industry, and I am for it.

Cordially yours,

*M. J. Raska*

o

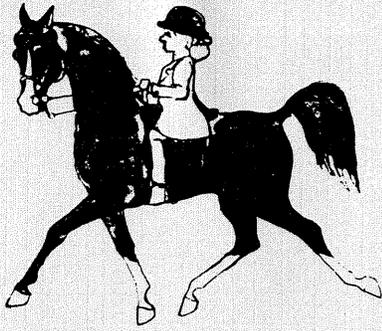
January, 1996

Sent AB589 LTR  
on 2-1-96

Representative Ott  
P.O. Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53708

I would appreciate it very much if you would schedule Assembly Bill #589 for a hearing. We would like to get this Bill passed. It is good for the horse industry, and I am for it.

Cordially yours, *Milo Measner*  
*438-240th St*  
*Osceola WI 54020*  
*Osceola*



**THE HOFFMAN FAMILY**

**(Jim, Carol & Kim)**

P.O. Box ~~644274~~ 53156  
~~Palmyra~~  
~~Oconomowoc, Wis.~~ 53066

fax / Phone: 1-414-495-4134

Sent AB589. LTR  
2-2-96

**SHAKHAN ARABIANS**

January 29, 1996

Alvin R. Ott  
Room 318 North  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 8953  
Madison WI 53708

Dear Mr. Chairman,

I have been informed by various state equine clubs that the agency you head is considering the possibility of eliminating this state's requirement for the equine "Coggins test."

The question is not if the state drops the test but rather why the state would want to and what affect will it have upon other states who allow Wisconsin equines to cross in and out of their borders. Would those states think Wisconsin was playing fair in the prevention of carriers of this? Would they create more stringent requirements on Wisconsin equines in order to effectively do the job Wisconsin use to do?

It is my intention to ask for your educated and cautious reaction to those that wish to abolish this health requirement. If there is ever a need for extra "man power" on this issue do not hesitate to contact myself.

I appreciate the time you have taken to consider this issue.

Best regards,

*Kim Hoffman*

KIM HOFFMAN

Rec'd 2-19-96  
Sent AB589. Ltr  
on 2-19-96

Thekla Fagerlie-Madsen  
1472 Steeple Drive  
River Falls, WI 54022

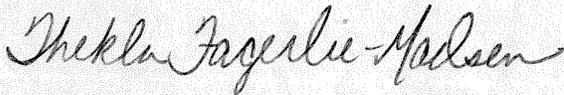
Representative Ott  
Chair, Agriculture Committee  
P.O. Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53708

RE: Assembly Bill 589

Dear Representative Ott:

As a multiple-horse owner, I would greatly appreciate anything any effort to get a hearing on the Assembly Bill 589. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Thekla Fagerlie-Madsen



**WISCONSIN  
STATE  
HORSE  
COUNCIL**

1675 OBSERVATORY DRIVE

MADISON, WISCONSIN 53706

*Sent AB 589. LTR  
1/25 to Froehle*

*AB 589*

Mrs. Carol Yohn  
N2522 Columbus-Fall River Rd.  
Columbus, WI. 53925

November 21, 1995

Rep. Alvin Ott:  
PO Box 8953  
Madison, WI. 53708

Dear Rep. Ott:

I understand that the bill concerning the elimination of all testing of equine for EIA will be considered in your committee.

On behalf of the Wisconsin State Horse Council, Inc. representing over 20,000 horse owners in this state request that this bill **NOT BE ALLOWED OUT OF COMMITTEE**. The Horse industry has worked for years along with the Department of Agriculture to regulate testing of EIA. We have finally come to something that is workable for regulation purposes and protection of horses and horse owners. To pass this bill would set us back 50 years. I can't state strongly enough, this is a **BAD BILL**, it is bad for the horses, and bad for the horse industry in Wisconsin. Please eliminate the possibility of this bill ever being passed.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have questions concerning the involvement of the State Horse Council on this issue, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Carol Yohn, Legislative Comm., Chair  
Wisconsin State Horse Council, Inc.

cc: Esther Schwartz, Pres.

*Dr Howard, O'Connor, Bellay*

By *Laura Hillenbrand*

# THE POLITICS OF EIA

*Rep Ott: Our EIA controversy here is not unique!  
Tom H.*

Leroy Coggins, DVM, (right, in a 1976 photo) developed a test for EIA 25 years ago. The test that bears his name now is mandatory for all horses entering the United States. More than 1 million horses are tested each year.

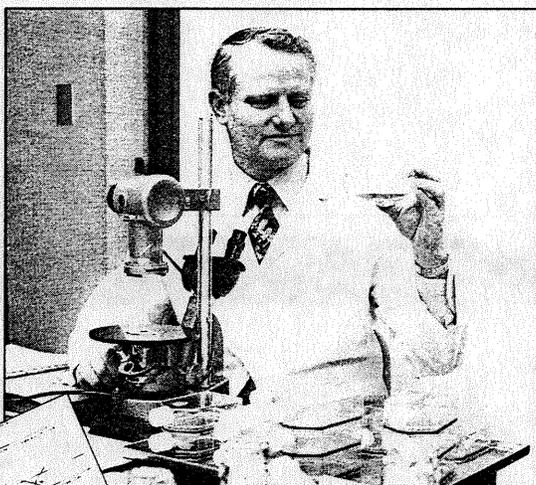


Photo courtesy, Cornell University

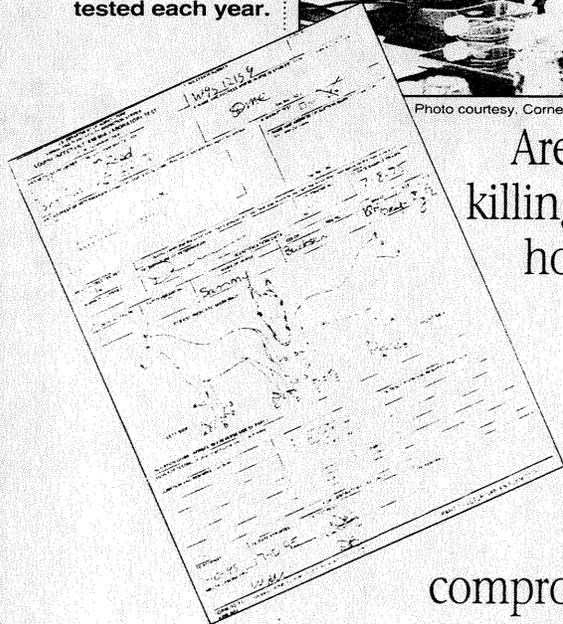
It was 1972, and along the sun-bleached lanes of Southern horse farms, a killer was on the loose. Borne on the mouth parts of biting flies and in the blood staining the necks of reused hypodermic needles, the equine infectious anemia (EIA) virus slipped into horses' bodies, commandeered their victims' immune cells and sapped their strength before extinguishing their lives. Horses died every day, and the newly approved Coggins test was disclosing an alarming 40 percent exposure rate in some areas. Horse owners cried out for relief and laid their fears at the feet of government. The time had come to attempt to control the disease. The only question was how.

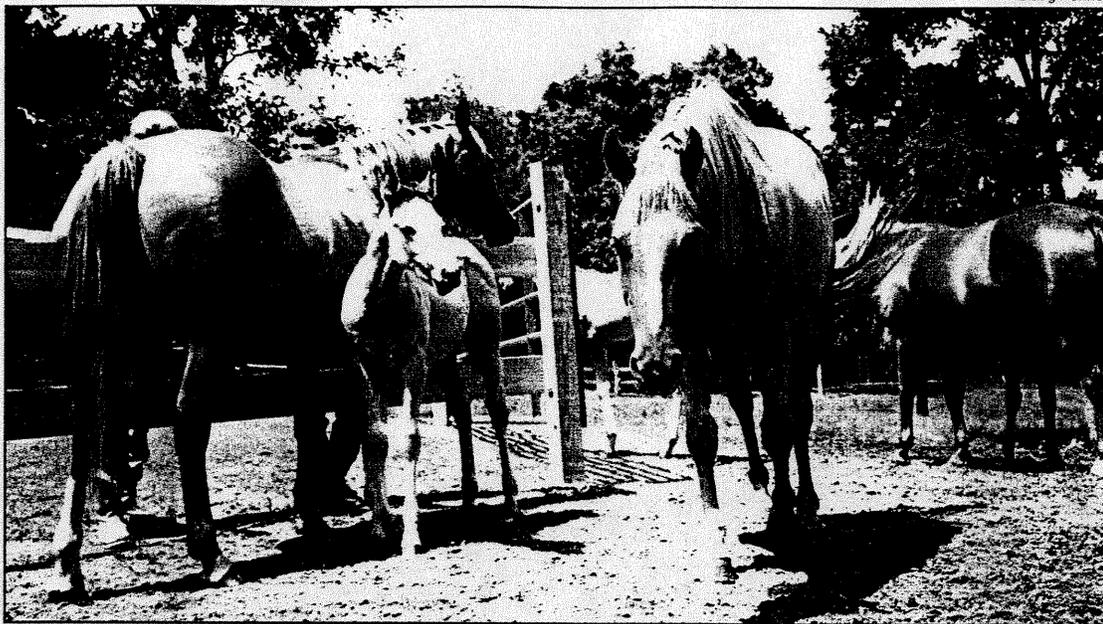
Of the divisive issues to reverberate through the horse industry, few have had more power to cleave neighbor from neighbor, embroil legislative bodies and generate lawsuits than the public policy on EIA. From the moment EIA laws were instituted, the issue has spawned impassioned opinion. In the nearly 25 years since regulations were first implemented, the gulf between the opposing sides has, if anything, widened. And many observers believe that politics and money have come to play as influential a role in determining how we cope with this disease as the disease itself.

### EIA infection

EIA, or "swamp fever," is an untreatable destruction of blood cells caused by a virus closely related to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the cause of AIDS. A blood-borne disease that af-

Are we needlessly killing thousands of horses each year, foolishly sustaining a killer virus or implementing an effective compromise on a life-and-death issue?





After having to euthanize these horses when they contracted EIA from untested horses on a property adjoining his farm, Arkansas breeder Doug Penner authored a bill to greatly strengthen the state's EIA regulations. In addition to mandating universal testing and mandatory slaughter of positive horses, the bill allows horse owners to check Coggins papers for horses kept within 440 yards of their property.

flicts only members of the equine species, it is transmitted mainly through large biting insects, principally horseflies and deerflies, and reused blood-tainted equipment. Though EIA occurs to some degree in most states, 90 percent of cases occur in the "hot zone," the states bordering the Gulf of Mexico or the Mississippi River, plus Oklahoma. And though rare in the United States, it can reach epidemic proportions when conditions are right; half of tested horses in many tropical regions of the world are EIA positive.

EIA produces three types of infection, depending, scientists suspect, upon the amount or strain of virus transmitted or the strength of the horse's immune system:

- In **acute cases**, the virus commandeers red blood cells. The combined onslaught of the virus and the immune system's antibodies kills the pirated cells and depresses the production of new red blood cells in the bone marrow. The result is anemia and organ-damaging inflammation, soaring fever, weight loss, internal bleeding, blood-shot eyes with watery discharge, teetering gait, jaundice<sup>o</sup>, edema<sup>o</sup> of the legs, chest and abdomen and, often, death.

- In **chronic cases**, horses remain in a lower grade but continuously ill state or cycle in and out of acute states.

- Though they may experience mild symptomatic cycles in the months after infection, **inapparent carriers** quickly learn to control the EIA virus, holding its replication to a minimum. But because the virus' surface proteins mutate unusu-

ally rapidly, continuously presenting a new and unfamiliar face to the immune system, it remains in the body for life. Inapparent carriers, an estimated 95 percent of EIA positives, remain healthy unless exposed to serious stress, such as another severe illness or immunosuppressant treatment.

Until 25 years ago, veterinarians were powerless against EIA, lacking even a practical diagnostic test. But in 1970, a research team led by Leroy Coggins, DVM, devised the agar gel immunodiffusion test, commonly called the Coggins test, that indicated EIA exposure by detecting antibodies<sup>o</sup> against the virus. The test does not specify whether the exposed horse is acute, chronic or inapparent. In 1972, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) began using the Coggins test to control EIA, mandating that imported horses be Coggins negative and that Coggins-positive horses be permanently marked and removed from contact with other horses by euthanasia, slaughter or quarantine. State regulations followed, typically requiring negative Coggins tests at time of sale, at state lines and at public gatherings, but there's no consistency in jurisdiction-to-jurisdiction policy.

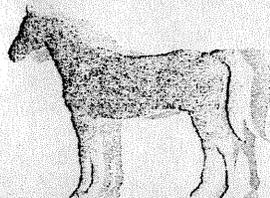
#### **Control versus eradication**

An EIA-free nation is a dream scenario, but regulation architects felt that the universal testing needed to achieve eradication would be practically impossible and prohibitively costly. Instead, they aimed for EIA control by mandating testing of the estimated 10 percent of horses who travel.

*Equus thanks Sally and Roger Lloyd for their assistance in the preparation of this article.*

**DIFFERENT DEGREES OF INFECTIOUSNESS:**

An acutely ill horse harbors heavy concentrations of the EIA virus in his bloodstream, as does a chronic case experiencing a feverish episode. In contrast, an inapparent carrier has only an infinitesimal amount of virus in his blood.



**acute**

One-fifth of a teaspoon (one milliliter) of this horse's blood contains enough virus to infect 1 million horses.



**chronic case**

One-fifth of a teaspoon of blood from a chronic case during a feverish episode contains enough virus to infect 1,000 horses.



**inapparent carrier**

Only one horsefly out of 6 million to bite this horse is likely to pick up and transmit an infected cell

Horses who test positive are euthanatized or quarantined, removing their "reservoir" of virus from circulation. Although these laws target horses who are most likely to spread EIA, they have no impact on the homebound population which, when infected, is capable of passing the disease along to herdmates, next-door neighbors and horses passing through their area.

One approach to identifying positive horses who slip through the current regulatory cracks by living in untested "reservoirs" or, occasionally, by coming up as false negatives on the Coggins test, is the Traceback Program proposed by Charles Is-sel, DVM, PhD, of the University of Kentucky's Gluck Equine Research Center with support from the USDA, the Southern Animal Health Association and the U.S. Animal Health Association (USAHA). This program would trace EIA back to its reservoirs by testing horses living near those who have tested positive and use sophisticated antibody and DNA<sup>o</sup> testing to retest horses with differing results on multiple Coggins tests or the newer ELISA tests.

In 1994, Louisiana took the ultimate control action, instituting universal yearly testing. Louisiana State Veterinarian Maxwell Lea, DVM, believes that the program will enjoy success similar to rabies vaccination requirements, which aren't enforced door to door but have nevertheless minimized rabies rates. "I'm not going to tell you that it's easy or that we do it 100 percent of the time," he admits. "But we're working very hard on it. We've gotten into areas where little or no testing has been done."

But many state veterinarians report that political and financial hurdles block the broader testing they believe is needed. In Idaho, a spike of new positives has spawned a drive for import testing in a state that now has no regulations. Idaho State Veterinarian Bob Hillman, DVM, wants more inclusive testing but doesn't believe that owners, who must comply with new laws, or the government, which must pay for enforcement and compensation for EIA carriers destroyed, would support it. "If the regulated industry doesn't want it, you can put it into effect, but you can't enforce it," he says. "Import testing will not prevent all the EIA. To get to the bottom of the problem, you're going to have to test exposed animals. But I'm not sure that's going to play out in Idaho. And there is no way we can indemnify EIA-positive horses. That's going to limit our ability to deal with the problem."

**LIKELIHOOD OF TRANSMISSION**

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with rising numbers of tabanids (horseflies, deerflies)	absence/ few tabanids
tabanid habitat in or surrounding horsekeeping area (wetlands in hardwood forests)	dry, unwooded environment
large biting insects are interrupted during feeding and complete blood meal within 30 minutes on another horse	small biting insects complete meal on one host
during insect season	during winter
uninfected horses mingle with infected horses	infected horses are physically separated from the uninfected
acute or chronic horses in feverish state are source of transmitted blood	inapparent carrier is source of transmitted blood

Several factors influence the spread of EIA, which is transmitted from horse to horse via blood-sucking insects or contaminated hypodermic needles.

Photos by Debbie Beve



**Begun in the early 1970s as a quarantine ranch for healthy EIA-positive horses, the FRIENDS facility near Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, accepts donations of inapparent carriers, which are then "adopted out" for a maximum of \$100 monthly for board. Adopters, such as the riders above, are free to ride the horses on the property.**

The opposite view holds that in at least some areas and possibly throughout the country, EIA incidence is too low to justify the expense and annoyance of regulation, especially when funds are channeled away from control of more common diseases. Some states, including Oregon, Montana, Nebraska and Washington, have stopped testing horses shipped in from certain disease-free states, and others have dropped in-state testing altogether. "For our status here," says Robert Mead, DVM, state veterinarian for Washington, "the only change I could see that would make sense would be to just drop [regulations]."

## AIDS, China and underfunding

The development of the treatment or vaccine that would make the EIA debate moot tops everyone's wish list, and in the shorter term, research could solve many lingering questions central to public policy disputes. Several institutions are working toward those goals, but research dollars are scarce and competition for them is keen.

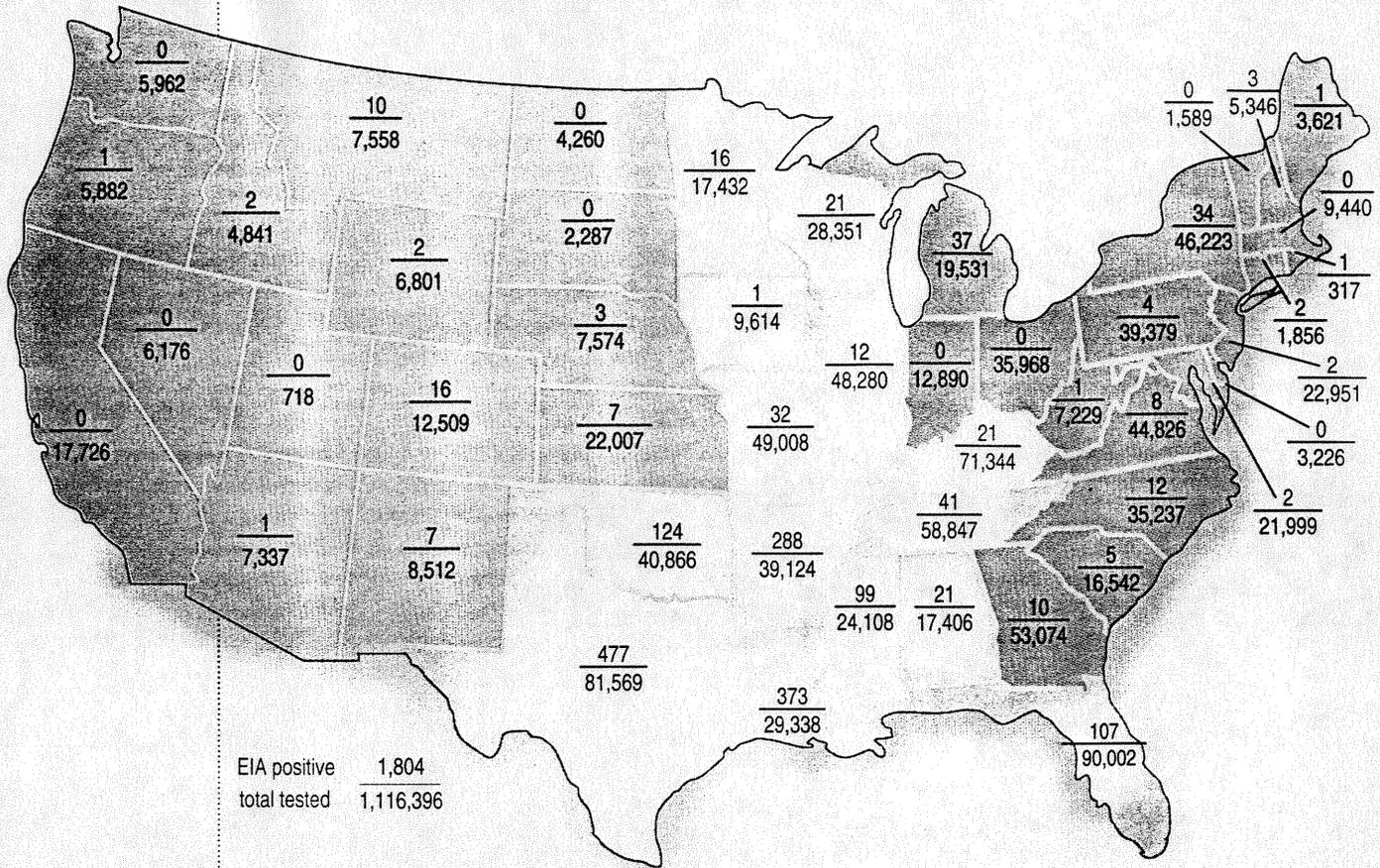
However, EIA has one factor in its favor: Because it is similar to HIV, nearly all research funding for EIA originates from the National Institutes of Health or other human medicine research sources whose organizers hope that EIA research can ultimately help AIDS patients. Thanks to this funding, research is being targeted toward discovering what immune system mechanisms are responsible for the different reactions to EIA infection, a preliminary step in the extraordinarily difficult task of creating a vaccine or antiviral therapy.

In spite of EIA's connection to AIDS, funding for its research is still very limited. The kind of large-scale study that yields definitive facts is a financial impossibility: when funds are made available, they are almost always in amounts that allow brief studies of small numbers of animals. This has consequences for not only the conclusiveness of research results but the caliber of scientist a program can hire. "You have to get enough funding to attract the talent," explains Crawford. "If you can't see support for a project beyond the next year, you're not going to attract very high quality talent to

work on that problem."

It is possible that the answers American researchers seek have already been found, but, for political reasons, are being withheld. Chinese researchers have developed an EIA vaccine that is, they claim, safe and effective. Unfortunately, most efforts to arrange cooperation in investigating the vaccine's applicability to the American EIA problem have run aground. "My understanding is that they consider their vaccine a national treasure," says Issel. "They would like to do international collaborations with it, but they are very careful about doing that, and up to this point, we have not been able to effect collaborative studies that would be of benefit to both parties."

The Chinese vaccine is not without potential problems. First, as a live virus, it has the potential to revert to the infectious strain, a problem that could cause American health officials to block its import. Secondly, it would render vaccinated horses EIA positive on tests, making differentiation between immunized and infected horses difficult. Nonetheless, American researchers are disappointed that political hurdles have so far prevented a mutually beneficial partnership. "A lot of our genetic techniques that we use to analyze our virus strains could be used to better define how their vaccine strain works," says Issel. "We would welcome the opportunity to study their strain, in part because it may point the way to an effective vaccine for AIDS."



Though incidence varies from year to year, 90 percent of EIA cases occur in the "hot zone," the states bordering the Gulf of Mexico or the Mississippi River, plus Oklahoma.

**Failures in enforcement**

Laws mean nothing if they're unenforced, and many horse owners are dismayed at what they perceive as poor EIA law enforcement. One problem is the way regulations are written. "You're not supposed to ride down a street without checking Coggins papers," says Michael Kronk, DVM, veterinarian for the Florida Research Institute for Equine Nurturing, Development and Safety (FRIENDS) quarantine ranch near Ft. Lauderdale. "Who's going to check? The cops? They wouldn't know. The [Coggins paper] description of the horse could be chestnut, but a cop may not know the difference between chestnut and bay."

No matter how well-intentioned, government regulations are only as successful as funding and enforcement allow. In North Carolina, for example, mandates requiring negative EIA tests at time of sale were approved but not codified because the government didn't fund enforcement.

A bill pending in Arkansas calls for universal testing that would be enforced in part by owners, who would have the right to check Coggins papers of neighbors' horses being kept within 440 yards of their property. Also, the Arkansas Horse Council is sponsoring clinics to teach proper Cog-

gins-paper checking at horse events. "Horsepeople," says horse council President Betty Jones, "are going to have to police their own industry."

Lack of uniformity in EIA regulations from state to state spurred USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Senior Staff Veterinarian Timothy Cordes, DVM, to propose uniform regulations at last fall's meeting of the USAHA, which created a subcommittee to seek such standards. Cordes is pushing for standardization along as hard a line as possible: "We're looking for a common denominator, but we're not looking to lose the ground we've gained." Yet in states with tiny, unchanging EIA rates and loose regulations, a push for uniform policies would likely run up against opposition because of the additional manpower and money their enforcement would require. A hard-line policy, says Mead, "would be a very hard sell here. It would not be a cost-effective program in the Northwest."

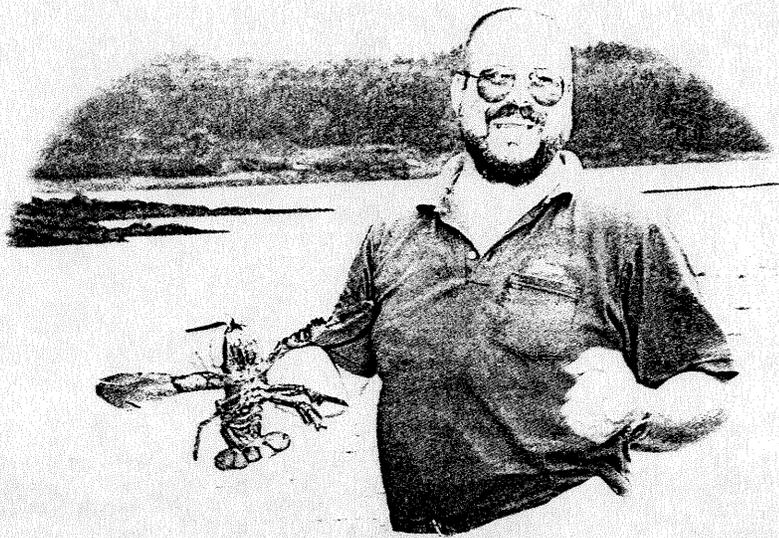
**The fate of inapparent carriers**

EIA has to hitch a ride to jump from one horse to another, usually via a blood-sucking insect or contaminated needle. The "blood donor" has to have a high level of circulating virus for the "re-

ipient" to be infected via a vector. Acutely ill horses and chronic cases during feverish episodes harbor plenty of virus in their blood to effect a transfer, Issel and his colleagues in research have found. But inapparent carriers, with only infinitesimal amounts of virus in their blood, appear to pose little transmission risk.

In the lab, inapparent carriers do transmit EIA: Injection of one to five milliliters (one-fifth to one teaspoon) of blood from inapparent carriers into healthy horses results in infection 70 to 80 percent of the time. But even the largest biting flies carry only about 10 nanoliters ( $10 \times 10^{-6}$  milliliters) of blood, containing, at most, 10, and usually far fewer, infective particles. Transmission from inapparent carriers being kept under natural conditions appears to be quite low. An Animal Medical Center study of dozens of inapparent carriers and EIA-negative horses kept together in a fly habitat for a total of 716 contact years found no EIA transmission. In a Louisiana State University study, researchers allowed 25 horseflies to feed on inapparent carriers before being moved to finish their meals on healthy horses. Again, no transmission. "If positive horses are kept a safe distance from other horses, there is essentially no threat of transmission," says Issel. "Too often there is a real stigma placed on the positive horse that far exceeds the biological threat that it poses." A pioneer in EIA transmission studies, S. Lynn Kittleson, DVM, of Minnesota's Goldmount Veterinary Center and coauthor of the Animal Medical Center study, concurs: "Inapparent carriers shouldn't be treated as infectious. The problem is deciding if they are truly inapparent carriers or if they're chronic."

In states with EIA-control regulations, the destroy-or-quarantine law is a death sentence for nearly all inapparent carriers because the lifelong quarantine option is impractical. In Louisiana, every positive horse, including inapparent carriers, is to be euthanized or sent to slaughter under the 1994 law (Arkansas is considering a



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similar bill) on the grounds that inapparent carriers can cycle into an acute stage and go AWOL from quarantine. "Keeping an inapparent carrier is like keeping a time bomb," says Arkansas horse owner Jones, who inadvertently bought an EIA-positive horse that had to be destroyed. "As long as there's one breathing, we're all in danger."

In 1978, Kittleson and fellow EIA researcher Tim Crawford, DVM, PhD, proposed a public policy that would free true inapparent carriers from the threat of destruction or lifelong quarantine. Their proposal was to give owners of EIA-positive horses the option of permanent quarantine or a 90-day official quarantine, during which the horse's temperature would be monitored daily; if his temperature never exceeded 102 degrees Fahrenheit during those three months, he would be released as a true inapparent carrier. Quarantined horses who suffered an EIA cycle during that time but who had been positive for less than a year would be returned to private quaran-

tine and monitored again after one year. Horses testing positive for more than one year would be deemed chronic and euthanatized if they experienced episodes of EIA signs. Kittleson and Crawford argued that the horses surviving this process would be unlikely to relapse under stress and would therefore be safe in the community.

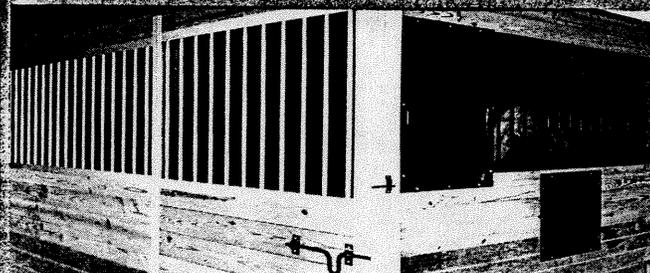
The proposal was never adopted, despite support from many researchers. States would have to finance the quarantine stations and change laws, something, Kittleson contends, governments are reluctant to do. Then there's what the researchers consider to be an exaggerated sense of risk among horsepeople. "A lot of the horse-owning public is very reluctant to tolerate any risk," says Crawford, now an associate professor of veterinary microbiology and pathology at Washington State University. "They want zero risk, and we can never prove that those animals pose zero risk. We see that in HIV. When people are not afflicted with the problem, they're very intoler-

ant of other people's afflictions."

A monitoring system based on temperature is not foolproof, however: If a horse experiences an EIA cycle, the virus may reach high levels days before the telltale fever develops. Another drawback is the necessity of honesty and awareness on the part of owners of inapparent-carrier horses. "If there's a horse at a show and someone says it's an inapparent carrier, how do you know? You don't know," says Travis McGuire, DVM, PhD, professor of veterinary microbiology and pathology at Washington State University. "If it has a febrile episode at the show, in a place with a mode of transmission, you can get transmission."

Resolving the inapparent-carrier debate depends upon identifying the causes and likelihood of stress inducing a flare-up of the symptomatic disease. Though empirical evidence indicates that the risk is very low—hundreds of inapparent carriers have spent decades at the FRIENDS quarantine ranch, exposed to severe weather conditions, yet

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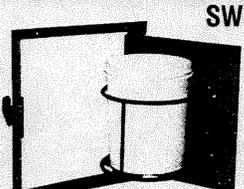
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only two have been observed cycling—the verdict of science is still out. “For the inapparent carrier who really has been inapparently infected his whole infection, it is unlikely that you will have an increase of virus replication that causes clinical disease. But that’s just a guess,” says Issel. “No one has done all the studies.”

### The impact on incidence

The best gauge of regulatory effectiveness would be a comparison of the current EIA incidence to that of years past. Yet until 1995, USDA figures calculated the percentage of positives among the total number of tests run. Since nearly every positive horse is retested several times, and since the tested population may be sampled more than once annually, the figures do not represent actual EIA incidence. Last year, the USDA began reporting the number of horses tested and the number of positive horses, but because of the earlier record keeping, current rates can’t be compared accu-

rately to those of the past.

EIA incidence appears to have dropped in the past two decades, and most veterinarians credit the regulatory efforts. “Even though the Coggins test presents a lot of problems for a lot of people,” says Kronk, who reports that a 40 percent positive rate in his Florida practice in 1972 has dropped to one positive out of 1,300 tests annually, “it helped solve a major problem.”

But the infection rate among the 90 percent of the American horse population never screened for EIA is, of course, unknown. “I don’t believe that testing a small percentage of the total horse population has changed the true disease incidence very much,” says Kittleson. “I am inclined to think that any decrease is due to repeated testing of the same population of horses.”

The destruction of horses suffering from acute and chronic cases of EIA may be distressing, but the removal of unquestionable sources of infection from the horse community justifies the action. Killing of the far larger percent-

age of Coggins-positive horses—the seemingly healthy inapparent carriers—is the source of most disgruntlement with current control policies. “EIA is not killing our horses,” says Kittleson. “In our fear, we are killing them with our tests and regulations.”

After a quarter century of regulation, research and controversy, EIA continues to divide the horse industry. In the absence of vaccines and effective treatments, control measures are the only means to inhibit the spread of the responsible virus. The loss of horses to acute cases of EIA contracted from untested “reservoirs” is tragic. So, too, is the destruction of perfectly sound inapparent carriers who are unlikely to infect other horses.

Until an EIA treatment or preventive comes along, the “best” public policy for controlling the disease depends upon who’s setting the priorities, who’s paying the bills and whose horses are lost to the infection itself or the regulations meant to stop it. ☺

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