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New Evidence About Potomac Fever

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NEW EVIDENCE ABOUT POTOMAC FEVER

Potomac Fever is one step closer to being solved as a result of recent collaborative research findings by the National Veterinary Services Laboratories, APHIS, USDA, Ames, Iowa; College of Veterinary Medicine, Urbana-Champaign, Illinois; and the University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine at New Bolton Center. The combined research effort gave additional evidence that a Rickettsial *Ehrlichia sennetsu*-like agent may be involved in Potomac Fever. Several horses and one New Jersey stallion, all of which had clinical signs of Potomac Fever, developed antibodies to this agent after contracting the disease. All of the cases, except the one from New Jersey, were tested for these specific antibodies prior to developing signs of Potomac Fever and were found negative.

Further research work will focus on the isolation of organisms from the blood of infected horses and a study on the efficacy of the antibiotic, tetracycline, in preventing this infection in horses. Tetracycline is one of the drugs of choice for human Rickettsial disease, such as Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. Though agents in man and animals may be similar, no evidence exists to date that people are affected with Potomac Fever.

The Morris Animal Foundation, which provided partial funding for initial studies of the disease at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine and the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, has provided additional funding to follow up on this lead. The Foundation, a public, nonprofit organization, sponsors studies of diseases

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of horses, cats, dogs and zoo animals through grants to veterinary colleges.

The researchers involved include Dr. Allen Jenny, National Veterinary Services Laboratories, Ames, Iowa; Dr. M. Ristic and Ms. Syndi Holland, Univer-

sity of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Illinois; and Drs. Jonathan Palmer, Robert H. Whitlock, Charles Benson, Helen Acland, Fern Tablin and Peter Mann, all from the University of Pennsylvania at New Bolton Center, Kennett Square, Pennsylvania.

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