



## It's time to focus on a mysterious disease.

Potomac horse fever (PHF) has puzzled scientists for decades.

- PHF is named for the Potomac River in Maryland — but has been diagnosed in at least 43 states.<sup>1</sup>
- It's associated with water — but has been reported in dry areas, such as northern Wyoming.<sup>2</sup>
- After nearly 30 years, its range of distribution is unknown<sup>3</sup> — but changing weather and improved diagnostics suggest it will continue to be more common.

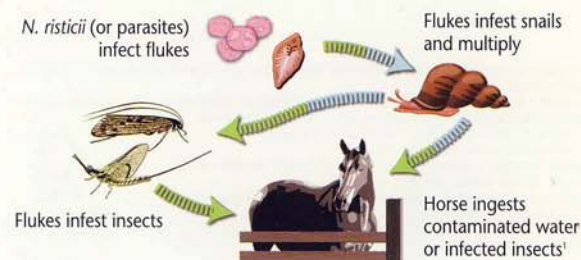
One statistic cuts through the mystery of PHF: 30% of infected horses will die.<sup>4</sup> Infected horses may suffer from fever, colic, depression, watery diarrhea — and pregnant mares may abort.<sup>3</sup>

Knowledge of the PHF life cycle helps clear up the mystery.

Recent years have revealed that the life cycle of PHF includes a parasite called *Neorickettsia risticii*, as well as flukes, freshwater snails and aquatic insects, such as caddisflies and mayflies.<sup>1</sup>

It is now believed that horses become infected by eating adult insects<sup>1</sup> and may also ingest infected fluke larvae while drinking contaminated water.<sup>1</sup>

### Potomac Horse Fever Life Cycle



**Despite its mystery, two things are clear about PHF:**

1. If PHF has occurred on a farm, it will probably occur again.<sup>5</sup>
2. Vaccinating horses helps protect them from the most severe effects of this serious and deadly disease.

You can follow some simple steps to reduce the populations of aquatic insects at home or while traveling, such as avoiding nightlights that can attract them. Another effective step is to protect horses each year with a PHF vaccine.

**Why we vaccinate horses with POTOMAVAC.™**

- POTOMAVAC is proven to help protect horses against the most serious effects of PHF, including death.<sup>6</sup>
- It is proven safe for horses as young as three months of age.<sup>7</sup>
- It is available in a combination vaccine that also protects against rabies.

**If you have any questions about Potomac horse fever vaccination for your horse, contact your veterinarian.**

<sup>5</sup>Madigan J and Pusterla N. Life cycle of Potomac horse fever – implications for diagnosis, treatment and control: a review. *AAEP Proceedings* 2005;51:158-162.

<sup>6</sup>Hamende V. Potomac horse fever cases confirmed in northern Wyoming. University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service. Press release, September 13, 2002. Available at: <http://wyovet.uwyo.edu/Diseases/2002/PotomacConf.pdf>. Accessed January 26, 2009.

<sup>7</sup>Merck Veterinary Manual. Ninth edition. 2005:236.

<sup>8</sup>Pusterla N, Madigan JE. *Neorickettsia risticii*. In Sellon DC, Long MT, eds. *Equine infectious diseases*. St. Louis: Saunders, 2007:360.

<sup>9</sup>Potomac horse fever. AAEP.org. Available at: [http://www.aaep.org/potomac\\_fever.htm](http://www.aaep.org/potomac_fever.htm). Accessed January 26, 2009.

<sup>10</sup>Meril trial ER 8-88-2.

<sup>11</sup>POTOMAVAC product label.

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