Influenza Outbreak in Quebec

Several stables in Quebec have suspected or confirmed cases of influenza. An outbreak is also occurring at the CHUV. At the moment, affected horses have moderate signs (fever, cough) and most are maintaining their appetite.

The incubation period is usually very short, 24 to 72 hours, and average shedding is 7 to 10 days after the onset of clinical signs. Unfortunately, excretors with few or no symptoms prolong the isolation period.

Outbreak management recommendations:

1) For a horse **without clinical signs** coming from an affected area (e.g. CHUV):
   - Strict isolation* for 14 days
   - OR Strict isolation* for 7 days + 2 negative PCR tests (nasal swab) 24 hours apart

2) For a horse **with clinical signs**:
   - Strict isolation* for 14 days after the last day of active clinical signs.
   - OR Strict isolation* 48 hours after the last day of active clinical signs + 2 negative PCR tests 48 hours apart.

3) Vaccination booster on non-febrile horses

*Strict isolation ideally involves a stall in a separate building or paddock where there is no contact with other horses. The virus can be spread through aerosols and indirect contact (cleaning material, grooming, feed bucket etc) routes. Rectal temperature should be taken twice a day and horses should be monitored for coughing and nasal discharge.

The most common complication is the development of secondary bacterial pneumonia.

The CHUV defers all non-emergency admissions. Because of aerosol transmission, emergency admissions should be considered potentially exposed. In order to limit the risk of spread, we do not recommend that horses currently hospitalized be returned home unless strict isolation can be achieved. In order to facilitate owner adherence to veterinary recommendations, the CHUV will assumes part of the cost of testing and boarding for the horses currently at the facility.