

## **Anaplasmosis**

### **What are the signs of Anaplasmosis?**

Affected horses act sick and present with a fever (temperature over 101.5 F). They may also show limb swelling or small pinpoint hemorrhages on the mucous membranes.

### **How is anaplasmosis spread?**

*Anaplasmosis is NOT spread from horse to horse.* It is caused by a bacterium, *Anaplasma phagocytophilum*, which is spread by deer ticks through bites. Signs occur 10-45 days after exposure.

### **What puts horses at risk for anaplasmosis?**

Tick bites. Proximity to woods or wild areas that harbor deer.

### **Is anaplasmosis around here?**

Yes. Area horse owners have been reporting many more ticks on their horses than have been seen in past years, and thus the risk of this disease has risen. The deer ticks that carry the organism are very tiny. GVEC has seen a significant increase in confirmed anaplasmosis cases in our patient population. It is one of the first things we consider when we assess horses for fevers.

### **How is anaplasmosis diagnosed?**

Blood tests that we can run at GVEC are highly suggestive of disease: sometimes we can see “footprints” of the bacterium (morulae) in white blood cells, and affected horses often show a low platelet count and/or a low white blood cell count. There are specific blood tests that can be sent to Cornell to confirm acute anaplasmosis, but they take several days to process. Generally, treatment is begun as soon as the disease is suspected, as early treatment is usually very effective.

### **How is anaplasmosis treated?**

The organism is very sensitive to an antibiotic that is administered intravenously, tetracycline. It is also sensitive to a couple of oral antibiotics. Generally treatment begins with intravenous antibiotic administration as soon as the disease is suspected. Early intervention may prevent complications and speed recovery.

### **Is there a vaccine?**

No.

### **Can I get anaplasmosis from my horse?**

No. However, deer ticks can transmit this bacterium to humans, dogs and livestock. Signs of illness are similar.

### **What can I do to reduce the risk of anaplasmosis?**

It is hard to eliminate the risk of tick bites, but pasture mowing may help. Some owners spray products like Frontline designed for tick control on dogs on their horse's legs and chest once a month.