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Various studies report that 8-19% of equine pregnancies result in abortion for reasons ranging from

placentitis to equine herpesvirus-1 (EHV-1). While not pleasant to think about, a post-mortem

examination is crucial in these cases to determine what caused the abortion; confirming disease is the catalyst for taking appropriate biosecurity measures to halt its spread.

subsequent abortions," said Bass.

For this reason, Luke Bass, DVM, MS, Dipl. ABVP, a field service veterinarian at Colorado State University's Veterinary Teaching Hospital, in Fort Collins, reviewed the steps practitioners should take when performing a post-mortem examination on an aborted fetus in a presentation at the 2015 American Association of Equine Practitioners Convention, held Dec. 5-9 in Las Vegas. "There are many causes of abortion, and identifying them could aid in further prevention of

He described some of the common causes based on four retrospective studies of 7,800 cases: The majority (58.5-67.3%, depending on the study) of causes were infectious; Noninfectious causes included twinning (5%), placental insufficiencies, umbilical cord problems (torsions making up 5-60%), congenital abnormalities, and fetal resorption;

The cause of 17% of abortions was unknown; Bacterial placentitis (inflammation of the placenta) is the most common cause of infectious abortion at 21%, with the primary causative bacteria being Streptococcus zooepidemicus;

13% of bacterial causes were due to leptospirosis. When the veterinarian arrives to examine an aborted fetus, he or she must decide whether to perform the necropsy on the farm, collect tissue samples and send them to a laboratory, or send the entire fetus to a laboratory. A necropsy on the farm might not be feasible if the veterinarian is running short

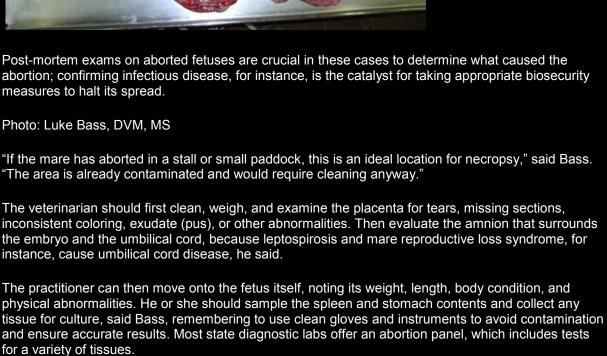
on time or for legal/insurance reasons, if the owner bought prospective foal insurance.

Viral causes of abortion include equine herpesvirus (EHV) -1 and -4 and equine viral arteritis, with

flat surface to work on, said Bass. He or she should also practice biosecurity measures and wear protective outerwear until infectious disease has been ruled out.

EHV-1 being most common (4%); and

If the veterinarian opts to perform the exam on the farm, he or she should find a well-illuminated large,



disease processes that can affect their horse population," he added.

Also, "Necropsies are an educational opportunity for the horse owner to get involved and see certain

After finishing the necropsy, the veterinarian should clean the area and dispose of the body properly.

"Performing a necropsy to diagnose the cause of abortion is very important as well as a relatively simple and straightforward procedure," Bass said. It's worth the \$250-300 cost of the procedure and lab submission to make a diagnosis that might help the veterinarian and farm manager prevent further

pregnancy losses.