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CHRB ADVISORY

OCTOBER 9, 2014

RODENTICIDE ADVISORY

Over the last 2 ½ years, traces of anticoagulant rodenticides have been found in the livers of a small number of horses with unusual hemorrhage through the CHRB/CAHFS-UC Davis necropsy program. Even though the levels of anti-coagulant rodenticides are well below what is generally considered necessary to induce toxicity, there is concern that high blood pressure in horses associated with racing and training may reduce the toxicity threshold.

Horsemen should be advised to take precautions against the accidental ingestion of rodenticides by horses at California racetracks and training facilities. Pest control measures at tracks are just one possible source of exposure; it is possible the anticoagulant rodenticides come in with feed or in some other manner. The California Horse Racing Board is attempting to identify the source of the anticoagulant rodenticides. Racing associations have been advised to remove anticoagulant rodenticides from the stable area, if any are in use, until the source is identified. The CHRB will release additional information as it becomes available.

Ante-mortem diagnosis of anticoagulant rodenticide exposure will be a challenge. It is highly unlikely that such exposure would be detectable in blood or urine testing given the low levels we are finding in post-mortem liver tissue samples. Veterinarians should consider anticoagulant rodenticide exposure with any unusual bleeding. Anticoagulant rodenticides toxicity produces a prolonged prothrombin time (PT) & activated partial thromboplastin time (aPTT). Anticoagulant rodenticides are Vitamin K antagonists, so treatment with Vitamin K-1 is a standard treatment. Whether Vitamin K-1 supplementation would be effective or justified prophylactically is unknown. As a reminder, Vitamin K-3 can be nephrotoxic.

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