Toxoplasma gondii, an obligate intracellular parasite, is an important pathogen of warm-blooded animals, including horses. Clinical signs include fever, ataxia, retinal degeneration and encephalomyelitis, and abortion or stillbirth in pregnant equids.

Studies performed at UC Davis have shown that at a titer cutoff of 320, horses with clinical signs compatible with EPM had 3.55 times the odds of seropositive T. gondii tests compared to those without clinical signs. In other species, increased infection rates are noted later in the calendar year (late summer and autumn), potentially due to peak periods of T. gondii oocyst shedding in domestic kittens and cats. When restricted to the autumn season, at a titer cutoff of 320, an EPM suspect horse had 6.4 times the odds of testing seropositive to T. gondii when compared to non-neurologic horses. The association between high T. gondii titres and clinical signs of EPM is potentially reflective of toxoplasmosis in horses. (1)

While future studies investigating the relationship between T. gondii and neurological signs compatible with EPM are necessary, the UC Davis VMTH Clinical Diagnostic Laboratories are proud to offer Toxoplasma gondii IFA testing to our veterinary clients to assist in clinical diagnostics.