

UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION - 2006

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 9 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON INFECTIOUS DISEASES OF HORSES

SUBJECT MATTER: EQUINE PIROPLASMOSIS

DATES: MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA, OCTOBER 12-18, 2006

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Equine piroplasmosis (EP) is classified as a Foreign Animal Disease (FAD) to the United States. However, it is assumed that the disease exists at some unknown prevalence in horses indigenous to the United States and in horses that have been imported into the United States. This assumption is based on the fact that prior to February 1, 2004, the official test for piroplasmosis, conducted on equine animals presented for importation into the United States was the compliment fixation (CF) test, a test that is known to occasionally yield false negative results. Unscrupulous owners, importers or agents have compounded the problem by purposely treating EP infected horses with immunosuppressive medications to create a false negative response to the CF test. An upgraded C-ELISA test was specified as the official test on August 22, 2005, and is highly unlikely to yield false negative results on adult horses.

EP infected horses may exist in the United States at a sufficient disease prevalence to infect resident tick vectors and possibly result in establishment of the disease as endemic in the United States.

There is no conclusive evidence that treatment of a carrier of either of the two strains of EP (*Babesia caballi* and *Babesia equi*) is a viable option.

It is crucial to 1) maintain stringent import restrictions that are sufficient to prevent the importation of seropositive horses into the U.S., 2) develop a cohesive policy at both federal and state levels for identifying and dealing with resident EP seropositive horses, and 3) request funding to research effective treatment protocols for EP.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) in partnership with USDA, Agricultural Research Services (ARS) to expand the funding for research into finding an effective and safe treatment for elimination of the carrier state for *Babesia caballi* and/or *Babesia equi*. Additionally, USAHA encourages USDA-ARS to work with owners of equine piroplasmosis (EP) seropositive horses found in the United States to make their EP horses available for participation in this research.

RESPONSE:

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal Plant Health Inspection

Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS)

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) continues to support research for the treatment of equine diseases; however, additional funding is needed to continue to expand research that will yield appropriate parasite clearing therapy for horses infected with *Babesia equi* and/or *Babesia caballi*. APHIS and the Agricultural Research Services (ARS) have entered into a partnership to test imidocarb and ponizural. As first steps, we have collaboratively obtained tick transmissible isolates of *B. equi* (Argentina) and *B. caballi* (Puerto Rico). Additionally, a colony of *Dermacentor nitens* ticks from Puerto Rico has been established within the Animal Disease Research Unit, Pullman, WA. Experimental design has been established through ARS-APHIS collaboration to initially test the ability of imidocarb to clear (provide sterilization) of horses infected with *B. equi* (APHIS) and *B. caballi* (ARS). Through our collaboration, we are working with infected horses in Washington and California to establish parasite levels, test certain chemotherapies for ability to clear infection, and to obtain naturally infected horses for research when owners and State veterinarians are so inclined.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Research Services (ARS)

Finding an effective and safe treatment for eliminating the carrier state for *Babesia caballi* and/or *Babesia equi* is critical to controlling EP, and ARS will look for opportunities to work with owners of EP-seropositive horses in the United States to make these horses available for participation in this research. ARS appreciates your input relative to funding and will give it full consideration as it develops its budget request.