

## UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION - 2005

**RESOLUTION:** 12 APPROVED

**SOURCE:** COMMITTEE ON INFECTIOUS DISEASES OF HORSES

**SUBJECT MATTER:** THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ADDITIONAL CATEGORY FOR NON-COMPETITION ENTERTAINMENT HORSES IMPORTED FROM CONTAGIOUS EQUINE METRITIS-AFFECTED COUNTRIES

**DATES:** Hershey, Pennsylvania – November 3-9, 2005

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

From time to time, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) receives requests from importers wishing to bring non-competition entertainment horses to the United States for extended periods of time without having to meet the import requirements for Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM). Currently USDA regulations list two main categories of eligibility for exemption from CEM import requirements – one temporary and one permanent. The first is for competition horses entering for 90 days or less and the second is for Spanish Pure-Bred Horses from Spain.

In some cases, the two categories listed above do not meet the specific needs of companies wishing to import non-competition entertainment horses, particularly with regard to the length of time they plan to remain in the United States. Examples of non-competition horses include circus horses, the Lipizzan Horses of Austria and the performance stallions in Cavalia. In some, but not all, cases, the period of time these companies propose spending in the United States exceeds the 90-day period under which competition horses, i.e., race horses and competition or event horses, are allowed entry into the United States without having to meet the testing import requirements for CEM.

Under special permitting, the USDA-APHIS-VS staff must negotiate agreements with the individual entities importing non-competition entertainment horses that allow them to meet their schedule of performance engagements. Often what is approved for one entity is different from that approved for another. The process can often be problematic to enforce and is time-consuming for the limited number of USDA-APHIS-VS staff available to deal with such requests. More problematic, however, is the relentless push for extensions to waivers. The decision to either grant or extend a waiver often becomes a politically based one, involving U.S. congressional representatives and the Secretary of Agriculture. Unfortunately, these waivers are very often granted without the support of the horse industry.

There is growing concern over the practice of repeatedly issuing special waivers and the horse industry would prefer to restrict their use. Horses granted entry under special waivers require continued monitoring while in the country. Given limited USDA-APHIS-VS personnel, there is significant concern over the Department's ability to adequately monitor such horses. An example of this is the Moscow circus horses that were imported into the United States in the 1990s for the purpose of performing at numerous venues throughout the United States. Within a very short time, USDA-APHIS-VS had lost track of these horses. The effort to evaluate, develop, monitor and maintain these types of special waivers requires a significant commitment of staff time for the USDA-APHIS-VS, particularly since the terms under which these waivers are negotiated frequently vary between groups.

Since the number of inquiries and requests for these types of special permits has increased in recent years, it would seem both timely and appropriate to standardize a protocol for dealing with

such requests through regulations.

**RESOLUTION:**

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) requests the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) recognize an additional category of horses presented for import into the United States and develop a separate set of requirements for horses imported into this country solely for non-competition entertainment purposes from countries where Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM) is known to exist. This request represents a modification of the existing federal program currently in place with regard to the importation of mares and stallions from CEM affected countries, i.e., a 90-day permit for competition horses and permanent entry requirements for horses to remain in the country.