



UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

2013 RESOLUTION

117TH ANNUAL MEETING

OCTOBER 17-23, 2013 ~ SAN DIEGO, CA

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 15 - APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON INFECTIOUS DISEASES OF HORSES

SUBJECT MATTER: NATIONAL EQUINE COMMUNICATION CENTER

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The United States horse industry is unique in the livestock sector for its broad diversity of activities in all regions of the country and the world. Horses involved in business, sport, recreation, entertainment, gaming and environmental support add to the agribusiness economic engine. In addition to an annual economic impact of over \$102 billion, the equine industry produces other public benefits, including recreation, exercise, working animals, stress reduction and entertainment.

The horse industry is at continuous risk of a disease outbreak of such proportion as to widely imperil the health of horses and threaten the economic viability of the industry. Equine industry reliance on the frequent and timely movement of healthy horses compounds this ever-present risk; the ability to move horses is critical to the industry. Compared to other livestock, horses are unique because they move much more frequently for breeding, competition, recreation and for import/export on both a temporary and permanent basis. Regulation of intrastate, interstate and international movement of horses is through multiple mechanisms, including policies overseen by the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services (VS), State Animal Health Officials (SAHOs), privately-owned facilities or events, and foreign countries. An infectious disease outbreak in the United States can result in Federal or State restrictions on horse movement to stop the spread of the disease. The economic burden of equine disease outbreaks may include costs incurred associated with movement restrictions, enhanced testing, disease-specific treatment requirements, cancellation of equine events and equine mortality.

Effective management of equine infectious disease incidents requires preplanning and communication between all entities involved in monitoring and protecting horse health, including individual owners, venue managers, industry associations, SAHOs and VS. A June 2010 Impact of Equine Diseases workshop, co-hosted by VS and the American Horse Council (AHC), highlighted the need for the equine industry to have a comprehensive national equine health plan (NEHP) outlining the prevention, diagnosis and control of equine infectious disease and the responsibilities and roles of the VS, SAHOs, practicing veterinarians and individual horse



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owners. The AHC subsequently developed a NEHP framework document. One part of the NEHP is the need for a comprehensive national Equine Disease Communication Center (EDCC) for providing accurate, real-time information on equine infectious diseases to regulatory officials and all segments of the industry to control disease and optimize equine health. The American Association of Equine Practitioners in conjunction with the AHC devised a plan and initiated creation of the infrastructure for an EDCC, which is a pivotal part of a NEHP. For the NEHP EDCC to be effective, identification and coordination of communication roles of VS, SAHOs and the horse industry are essential.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges the United States Department of Agriculture, American Horse Council, American Association of Equine Practitioners, other equine industry representatives and the National Assembly of State Animal Health Officials to collaborate in the establishment of the Equine Disease Communication Center.

INTERIM RESPONSE:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services (VS) recognizes the concerns of the U.S. Animal Health Association and appreciates the opportunity to respond. VS is committed to ensuring the development of the Equine Disease Communication Center, the initial component of a National Equine Health Plan.

VS continues to work closely with the American Horse Council on this issue and represented USDA at the American Association of Equine Practitioners National Equine Health Plan (Equine Disease Communication Center) Task Force meeting in December 2013. We appreciate additional opportunities to collaborate with the American Horse Council, American Association of Equine Practitioners, other equine industry representatives, and the National Assembly of State Animal Health Officials in the establishment of the Equine Disease Communication Center. Our goal is to collaborate with these stakeholders to finalize the National Equine Health Plan by the end of fiscal year 2014.