



UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Resolution

114th Annual Meeting ~ November 11-17, 2010

Minneapolis, MN

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 28 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON INFECTIOUS DISEASES OF HORSES

SUBJECT MATTER: DEVELOPMENT OF FRAMEWORK FOR EQUINE HEALTH PROGRAM WITH EMPHASIS ON EQUINE INFECTIOUS DISEASES

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The United States equine industry is both domestic and international in scope. Horses move frequently for breeding, competition and recreation. Horses are frequently exported and imported on both a permanent and temporary basis. The ability to move horses is critical to the industry. The freedom to move horses is based on policies and safeguards that protect the health of the horses and the economic stability of the equine industry. The intrastate, interstate and international movement of horses is regulated through multiple mechanisms including policies overseen by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), state animal health authorities and foreign countries. Privately owned facilities and equine events also implement requirements for the entry and participation of horses moved onto such venues. Effective control of equine infectious diseases must involve preplanning and communication between those involved in the promotion of the health of horses including the individual owner, the venue managers, the industry associations, state animal health officials and USDA.

The equine industry incurs costs during disease outbreaks due to enhanced testing, movement restrictions, treatment required for sick animals, cancellation of equine events, and equine mortality. To optimize equine health through the control of equine infectious diseases, a framework document is required to develop a comprehensive United States Equine Health Plan. The framework document would be followed by the addition of more detailed, specific plans.

A workshop co-hosted by USDA and the American Horse Council in June of 2010 provided the opportunity for a broad representation from the equine industry to discuss roles and responsibilities for equine infectious disease control. To become more informed of equine infectious disease issues, representatives at the workshop worked through two equine disease case scenarios to identify and discuss control options. One clear outcome from the workshop was the need for the equine industry to have a formal equine health plan outlining the issues surrounding the prevention, diagnosis, and control of equine infectious disease and the responsibilities and roles of the federal government, state authorities, and the industry in this effort. The critical first step is development of a framework document for a USDA Equine Health Program.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) requests that the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services dedicate the necessary resources for continued collaboration with industry to develop a framework document for an Equine Health Program, with an initial emphasis on prevention and control of infectious diseases. The USAHA further requests that equine industry representatives,

state animal health officials and a representative from the USAHA Committee on Infectious Diseases of Horses be included in the preplanning process in the development of the framework document. Further, USAHA requests that the completed framework document be shared with a broader group of state animal health officials and equine stakeholders for further input to develop a more detailed plan and to prioritize areas of focus for disease monitoring and disease containment.

INTERIM RESPONSE:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services (VS) recognizes the economic contribution of the equine industry to U.S. animal agriculture and the benefits to individuals and society derived from equine ownership.

VS appreciates the interest of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) in developing a national framework to address equine health issues. This framework document will be a first step toward addressing potential vulnerabilities in the safeguarding system for the equine industry.

While immediate and long-term budget uncertainties prevent us from making commitments regarding future funding requests for equine health, VS is committed to providing resources and guidance to develop a framework document that can be a basis for establishing a national equine health program. VS will continue to work closely with the USAHA Infectious Diseases of Horses Committee and other external stakeholder groups as this new initiative moves forward.

FINAL RESPONSE:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) acknowledges the concerns of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) and appreciates the opportunity to respond.

USDA APHIS VS recognizes the economic contribution of the equine industry to U.S. animal agriculture and the benefits to individuals and society derived from equine ownership.

VS also appreciates the interest of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) in developing a national framework to address equine health issues and is supportive of this concept. Such a framework could be a first step toward addressing potential vulnerabilities in a safeguarding system for the equine industry. However, immediate and long-term budget uncertainties prevent VS from making any substantial commitment to, or additional funding requests for, equine health at this time. VS will continue to work closely with USAHA's Committee on Infectious Diseases of Horses and other external stakeholder groups as we move forward on this framework.