# REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFECTIOUS DISEASES OF HORSES

Chair: W. Kent Fowler, Sacramento, CA
Vice Chair: James A. Watson, Jackson, MS

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The Committee convened at 1:00 pm on Monday, October 12, 2009 at the Town and Country Resort and Convention Center, San Diego, California. The meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm. There were 25 members and 43 guests present. The meeting was Chaired by Kent Fowler with the assistance of the Vice-Chair, James Watson.

In drawing up the agenda for this year's meeting, emphasis was placed on a limited number of diseases and health-related issues of interest and concern to the equine industry. As in recent years, the number of topics was restricted in order to provide ample time for discussion of each agenda item. One of the agenda items was a summary of the First Conference of Experts on Contagious Equine Metritis that took place on October 9, 2009 at the Town and Country Resort and Convention Center.

The opening presentation entitled, "Recent Advances in Our Knowledge of Equine Influenza", was given by Thomas Chambers, a faculty member of the Maxwell H. Gluck Equine Research Center, Department of Veterinary Science, University of Kentucky.

Equine influenza of the H3N8 subtype remains one of the most common infectious diseases of horses worldwide. Like all influenza A viruses, equine influenza viruses in circulation undergo antigenic drift over time, which eventually renders vaccines obsolete. To combat antigenic drift, surveillance and characterization of virus isolates is necessary so that appropriate virus strains for vaccines can be selected. Equine influenza is not a notifiable disease in the USA, which hinders surveillance efforts. However, equine influenza is also a disease that is spread by international transport of horses, and some countries have stringent horse importation requirements to provide barriers to entry of equine influenza.

An international Expert Surveillance Panel under the auspices of the OIE was established in 1995 which annually collects and reviews epizootiological data on equine influenza virus, including comparisons of circulating strains with vaccine strains and evidences for vaccine failures in the field. In addition to the now-standard analysis of phylogenetic relationships among strains based on sequences of the viral hemagglutinin (HA) major surface antigen, a new analytic method called antigenic cartography now permits visualization of antigenic relationships among multiple strains that were previously hidden in masses of serologic data. Based in part upon antigenic cartography results, the most recent (January 2009) report of the Expert Surveillance Panel makes the following conclusions: (1) the vaccine strain recommendation of an American-lineage strain antigenically resembling South Africa/2003 virus is still supported. Vaccines meeting this recommendation (using the Ohio/2003 strain) are now available in the USA. (2) The previous recommendation that vaccines include a Eurasian-lineage strain resembling Newmarket/2/1993 is no longer supported. Viruses of the Eurasian lineage are still isolated sporadically, but have not been responsible for significant outbreaks in many years. (3) The American lineage continues to undergo antigenic drift. Antigenic cartography suggests that the American lineage is splitting into two antigenically distinct sub-clades. It is reasonable to expect that eventually these will become sufficiently dissimilar that S.Africa/2003-like vaccine strains will no longer be effective.

Recent evidences have arisen that equine H3N8 influenza viruses can transmit to other species: canine influenza is now well established in the USA, a report has appeared of the isolation of equine influenza viruses from diseased swine, and a serological survey suggests that humans can potentially become infected.

The next agenda item was a summary presentation of the First Conference of Experts on Contagious Equine Metritis. Summary comments were presented by Kent Fowler, Barbara Porter-Spalding, Tom Bunn, Michaela Kristula, Stan Bruntz and Peter Timoney. This conference, in its' entirety, appears in these proceedings.

John Clifford, Deputy Administrator for Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS), presented a review of USDA funding for equine line items. Dr. Clifford acknowledged the importance of equine issues to the national economy and reinforced that there must be recognition of the funding limitations for equine programs. The only equine line item funding is for equine slaughter transport; none exist for equine disease programs. The 2009 Contagious Equine Metritis Incident brought these limitations to the forefront. The Equine Program Senior Staff Veterinarian position funding comes from user fees for slaughter horse transportation. Dr. Clifford reinforced that this recently vacated position will be filled to provide leadership and oversight for equine programs and equine import issues. Dr. Clifford reinforced that USDA does provide support for equine disease issues through diagnostic laboratory support, and that if an incursion of a disease such as African Horse Sickness were to occur, USDA Credit Commodity Corporation (CCC) funds would be made available.

The Committee Chair expressed to Dr. Clifford the Committee's desire and strong support for prompt hiring into the recently vacated Equine Program Senior Staff Veterinarian position.

Mike Short, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs, Division of Animal Affairs and Chair of the Subcommittee on Equine Piroplasmosis (EP), gave the Subcommittee Report. The Subcommittee's activities the past year have revolved around the EP serosurvey and discussions concerning the research and treatment of EP positive horses at ARS in Pullman, Washington.

The samples used for the National EP Sero-survey were obtained from all National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) laboratories conducting EIA testing and two additional non-NAHLN laboratories that performed a large number of EIA tests. The National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) received over 43,000 samples of EIA banked sera from 38 EIA laboratories representing 35 states. The numbers of samples used from each lab were weighted proportionally by the number of EIA tests performed by each lab annually and the samples used from each lab were then randomly selected. Fifteen thousand serum samples were tested at NVSL using the commercial VMRD ELISA test kits. All positive samples and 80 negative samples close to the positive cutoff were submitted to ARS in Pullman, Washington for confirmation testing by Western Blot. The sample data including the number of confirmed positives was submitted to Center for Epidemiology and Animal Health (CEAH) in Fort Collins, Colorado for analysis and calculation of a prevalence number. When a prevalence number is determined, the EP Working Group will meet to discuss the results and produce the summary report. It is anticipated that the sero-survey results will be released by the end of November 2009. The Subcommittee Report was approved by the membership and is included in these proceedings.

Don Knowles, USDA Agriculture Research Service (ARS), authored a treatment result research publication concerning imidocarb dipropionate clearing persistent *Babesia caballi* infection with elimination of transmission potential. In addition, research is ongoing at NVSL concerning treatment options for *B. equi* infected equids using ponazuril as a proposed effective treatment.

Tom Bunn, NVSL, Director of Diagnostic Bacteriology Laboratory, reported about ongoing research to demonstrate the ability of imidocarb to clear horses infected with *Theileria* (*Babesia) equi.* Twelve ponies were inoculated with *B. equi* and 8 of these ponies were treated with imidocarb. Clearance was defined by a negative PCR, failure to establish infection after sub-inoculation and failure of ticks to acquire parasites after feeding. Cleared animals may or may not be serologically negative. Three naïve intact horses were inoculated with RBCs from treated, PCR negative horses and showed no sero-conversions after 90 days. Two naïve intact horses inoculated with RBCs from untreated horses sero-converted by both CFT and cELISA after 90 days. The next steps in the project are to continue sub-inoculation of sero-negative horses. If sub-inoculation horses fail to seroconvert, tick acquisition will be performed on donor ponies. As a final test of clearance, splenectomies will be performed.

Angela Pelzel, USDA-APHIS-VS, Western Regional Epidemiologist, presented a review of piroplasmosis cases in Missouri and Kansas. The initial case was a QH bush track racehorse presented to Kansas State University and found to be positive for *B. equi*. An additional six horses were found to be positive for EP on the Missouri index premises. In addition, traceouts led to six other premises in Missouri and Kansas. Two of the seven positive horses were illegally removed from the quarantined Missouri premises and have yet to be located. The Kansas positive EP horse left the state prior to a quarantine being placed on the premises and has also not been located. This incident highlighted challenges the bush track racing industry poses to veterinary regulatory

officials. Challenges include underground and illegal activities, unsanitary practices, limited use of licensed veterinary care, unknown scope of participants, highly mobile participants and often a language barrier. Outreach and education to address this issue should be offered to veterinarians, racing commissions, breed registries, horse owners and bush racing track participants.

Ellen Buck, USDA-APHIS-VS, National Center for Import Export, presented a summary of the USDA role in planning for the World Equestrian Games (WEG) 2010. The hosting of the WEG in North America and Kentucky was based on the USDA acceptance that Equine Piroplasmosis (EP) positive horses be allowed to compete in all phases of WEG competitions, including field and stadium events. Equine industry support for this provision existed. Planning and risk assessments, including tick and wildlife surveys, began in 2002. The conclusion was that the risk posed for transmission from positive horse participation in the WEG was low. Quarantine facilities for positive horses were toured. An EP Control Plan developed and approved by USDA includes identification of positive horses before arrival in US, testing of horses upon arrival, fines for horses test positive without previous history, color identification of all positive horses, separate temporary quarantine facilities, separate positive horse stables, designated stewarded schooling and grazing areas for positive horses, specific standard operating procedures for restrictions on dog accessibility to the grounds, and tick inspections and acaricide treatments of horses and facility application. Additionally, EP positive horses must depart the country within 10 days of the end of the event.

Rusty Ford, Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Equine Program Manager, presented on the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games 2010 – Veterinary Preparedness Plan.

During the period September 25 through October 10, 2010, the Kentucky Horse Park (KHP) in Lexington, Kentucky will serve as host to the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games (WEG). In excess of 700 equine athletes from all parts of the world will be imported into Kentucky to compete in one of the eight World Championships offered during the 16-day period of the Games.

Outbreaks of communicable disease occur sporadically among equine populations congregated at training facilities, public boarding stables and other similar facilities. The Kentucky State Veterinarian's Office has regulatory responsibility to contain, manage and resolve outbreaks of communicable equine diseases occurring in these public environments. Effective procedures and strategies developed over the years have been customized to best meet the unique challenges presented by the 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games. To further reduce risk of introducing disease-causing agents, the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's Office of the State Veterinarian (OSV) worked jointly with the USDA Veterinary Services (USDA), the Federation Equestre Internationale Veterinary Committee (FEI) and the WEG Veterinary Services Coordinator to develop specific procedures of importation, disease mitigation and infectious disease protocols to be utilized in conjunction with the standard Kentucky Horse Park equine disease surveillance procedures. These procedures and protocols include heightened biosecurity practices, strategically prescribed immunizations and acaricide treatments, daily physical examinations, and a centralized reporting system of any and all abnormal findings. The summary details of the WEG Veterinary Preparedness Plan for the Games were provided to IDOHC members.

Eileen Ostlund, Head of Equine and Ovine Viruses Section in the Diagnostic Virology Laboratory, NVSL, gave an update on the EIA Laboratory Approval Working Group.

The USDA-APHIS-Veterinary Services (VS) Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) Laboratory Approval Working Group was formed in mid-2009 to develop appropriate criteria for obtaining and maintaining EIA approved laboratory status. The group is comprised of representatives from the National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL), VS Animal Health Program staff, Eastern and Western Region Area Veterinarians-in-Charge (AVICs), and VS Regional and Area epidemiologists. Activities for the first few months since group inception are reported herein.

The EIA working group is evaluating the frequency of laboratory inspections and application of user fees for inspections with a goal of increased consistency in these activities. Current approved EIA laboratories were queried in late summer of 2009 regarding their operations. Specific questions addressed the number of tests and methods used by the laboratories, the clientele served, primary purposes for testing and anticipated EIA training needs. Data analysis is underway.

The EIA laboratory approval working group aims to refine guidelines for obtaining and maintaining laboratory approval, taking into account EIA control program needs and VS resources. Outcomes, including any recommended changes to VS policies, will be shared with relevant stakeholders including AVICs, State Animal Health officials, and the USAHA Committee on Infectious Diseases of Horses, as well as its EIA Subcommittee.

Dee Ellis, Assistant State Veterinarian, Texas Animal Health Commission and Chair of the Subcommittee on Equine Infectious Anemia, gave the Subcommittee report. The Subcommittee focus was to continue outreach

activities related to the implementation of the 2008 USAHA IDOHC Resolution to change the EIA control program to an eradication program. Outreach to the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) Health Committee and the Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA) Equine Committee resulted in passed resolutions by both groups in support of the enhanced EIA eradication program. A second Subcommittee focus was to explore and enact actions that "at risk" states (Texas, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana and Oklahoma) could independently initiate regardless of future USDA cooperative funding or rule modification. Meetings with USDA-APHIS-VS equine staff and "at risk" states resulted in cooperative state-initiated plans and efforts to raise awareness of EIA issues by coordinating simultaneous interstate road stop activities along the common borders, post road stop public information releases emphasizing the importance of compliance with EIA and other health regulations, initiating implementation of the recommended 3-tiered laboratory concept within each state if possible, and the preparation and submission of the state's conceived uses of USDA cooperative funds. Conceived uses of funds were for surveillance, epidemiology, mapping initiatives, indemnity, and accelerated compliance activities. In addition, productive meetings were held with USDA leadership on cooperative funding needs to support EIA programs in the "At-risk" states. USDA consideration is being given to limited-level cooperative funding support to assist these states with their outlined planned activities.

Contingent upon the Committee Chair approval, Dr. Becky Brewer will be the new EIA Subcommittee Chair. The Subcommittee Report was approved by the membership and included in these proceedings.

**Committee Business:**

Following conclusion of the scientific program, the Committee went into Business Session. One resolution on Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM) was considered, approved and forwarded to the Committee on Nominations and Resolutions for approval by the general membership. A proposed resolution on microchipping Equine Infectious Anemia tested equids was considered but lacked Committee support. In addition, the Committee considered and approved support for a resolution approved and forwarded by the Committee on Import-Export concerning the failure of importing countries to follow OIE guidelines for importations of animals. The Committee also considered and approved a recommendation to USDA-APHIS-VS that the recently vacated Equine Programs Senior Staff Veterinarian position in Riverdale be filled as soon as possible. The Committee meeting was adjourned at 6:00 pm.

**REPORT OF THE SUBCOMMITEE ON EQUINE PIROPLASMOSIS (EP)**

Dr. Mike Short, Chair
Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

The EP Subcommittee for 2008-2009 met via four conference calls to continue work on the completion and support of the National EP Sero-survey, obtain and discuss the latest updates and research into methods of treatment of EP infected horses and to discuss the implications of the Missouri and Florida EP positive horses.

During the Subcommittee meetings, the following was concluded:

1. In light of the recent clinical and positive EP horses detected in Missouri and Florida and the knowledge that prior to February 1, 2004 the complement fixation (CF) test, which lacks sensitivity, was used for import testing, the National EP Sero-survey is very important in allowing assessment of the actual prevalence of EP in the United States' horse population. The results of the Sero-survey will play a significant role in the future actions and recommendations of this committee as well as potential testing requirements from foreign countries.
2. The samples used for the National EP Sero-survey were obtained from 36 of the NAHLN labs conducting EIA testing and two additional non-NAHLN labs that performed a large number of EIA tests. NVSL received over 43,000 samples of EIA banked sera from 38 EIA laboratories representing 35 states. The numbers of samples used from each lab were weighted proportionally by the number of EIA tests performed by each lab annually and the samples used from each lab were then randomly selected. Fifteen thousand samples were tested at NVSL using the commercial VMRD ELISA test kits. All positive samples and 80 negative samples close to the positive cutoff were submitted to ARS in Pullman, Washington and confirmation testing was done using the Western Blot.
3. Currently, the sample data, including the number of confirmed positives, has been submitted to CEAH in Fort Collins, Colorado for analysis and calculation of a prevalence number. Once a prevalence number is determined, an EP Working Group will meet to discuss the results and produce an out report.
4. The USDA *Draft Policy for Domestic EP Reactor Horses* needs to be reviewed and possibly modified to include more descriptive definitions of contact and exposed horses, longer traceback and forward periods and potential allowance of treatment of *B. caballi* horses, with the recent release of treatment research from ARS in Pullman, indicating the clearance of the organism from treated horses.
5. While both ARS in Pullman, Washington and the NVSL have ongoing research into effective treatments for EP infected horses, the EP Subcommittee recognizes the need for, and strongly supports, funding for continued research. Much of the recent research has been done using the drug imidocarb with some new trials beginning using other antiprotozoal drugs. Continued research is needed to find an effective, validated method of treatment of infected horses as well as methods of stopping the spread of the EP organism, such as vaccines which result in sterilization of the tick after feeding on vaccinated animals.
6. The introduction or spread of tick vectors that can transmit EP is of continued concern. There is unknown but inherent risk from the introduction of foreign origin ticks, which are competent EP vectors, the spread of the *Boophilus* ticks north from Texas and the unknown potential for some domestic ticks to play a role in transmission. These risks require continued efforts to prevent the introduction of foreign ticks, halt the spread of the *Boophilus* ticks from South Texas and continue research into tick control methods.
7. Funding and risk assessments are important to prevent sero-positive horses from entering the United States. Anecdotal reports of horses being pretreated with drugs, including steroids, to produce false positives on import testing and horses being illegally imported from piroplasmosis endemic countries have been reported.

The Equine Piroplasmosis Subcommittee introduced two resolutions at the 2008 USAHA Annual Meeting. The two resolutions were approved:

**RESOLUTION 27:**

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) to revise the *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) to require all equids imported into, or returning to, the United States be identified with an implanted radio frequency identification (RFID) microchip as recommended by the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) Equine Species Working Group that complies with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 11784 and 11785 standards (134.2 kHz), unless already implanted with a readable 125 kHz microchip. Universal RFID readers should be present at all import centers and border stations to read both 125 and 134.2 kHz microchips.

Resolution 27

**FINAL RESPONSE:**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services (VS) recognizes the concerns of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA). The *Code of Federal Regulations* currently does not require permanent identification for horses being imported into or returning to the United States. However, VS' traceability goal is to provide timely traceback of animals in the event of a disease outbreak. VS is developing a proposed rule that will address the identification of several species of imported animals, including horses.

**RESOLUTION 28:**

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) and USDA, Agricultural Research Service (ARS) to request expanded funding for research into finding an effective and safe treatment for elimination of the carrier state for *Babesia caballi* and *Babesia equi*.

**FINAL RESPONSE:**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services recognizes the concerns of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA). The partnership between APHIS and the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) has provided for an active research program at the ARS Pullman location to solve problems relevant to equine piroplasmosis, including the development of new treatments for this disease, and we agree that this work is critical to ensuring the protection of the U.S. horse population.

Further, through an ARS/APHIS/University collaboration we have completed research concerning treatment to remove transmission risk from *Babesia caballi*-infected horses. We have also shown, through research, that *Dermacentor nitens* ticks are reservoirs for *Babesia caballi* infection through only one generation. In addition, we have provided data affirming the current regulatory policy of equating positive serology, infection, and transmission risk with *Babesia caballi*.

Although immediate and long-term budget uncertainties prevent us from making any commitments regarding future funding requests, we will consider USAHA's input as we formulate future budgets.

No resolutions have been submitted by the EP Subcommittee this year as most of the pertinent information needed to put forth viable resolutions has just been released or is forthcoming, most notably the pending sero-survey results, the need for modifications to the USDA *Draft Policy for Domestic EP Reactor Horses* in light of the Missouri EP positive horses and the recent research results indicating certain strains of *B. caballi* may be treatable.

## REPORT OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON EQUINE INFECTIOUS ANEMIA

Dr. Dee Ellis
Texas Animal Health Commission

The focus of the EIA Sub-Committee activities in 2008-2009 was two pronged. First, members continued outreach activities encouraging/facilitating change from a national EIA control program to an eradication program, and non-USDA employees of the sub-committee continued to encourage that agency to implement internal changes related to lab protocols, funding, and rule/regulation changes, as outlined in the IDOHC USAHA resolution passed in 2008.

As the Sub-Committee chair, I traveled to the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) meeting in San Diego, to present the USAHA EIA resolution and concept to that organization's "Health Committee". It is my understanding that the organization passed the resolution to support the enhanced EIA program.

I also presented the same resolution to the National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA) Equine committee in Kentucky in April, and that organization also passed the resolution.

The second focus of the sub-committee was to explore and enact any actions that the "At risk" states could begin on their own, regardless of future USDA cooperative funding or rule modification. As a result, the state veterinarians from 4 of the 5 at-risk states met in Ruston, Louisiana, in June along with USDA equine veterinary staff.

The attendees at the meeting agreed to:

- Raise the awareness of EIA issues by initiating and coordinating simultaneous interstate roadstop activities along the common borders. Texas and Louisiana will hold coordinated activities in October, and Texas and Oklahoma will do the same in November. Before and after the events, the need for compliance with EIA rules will be released through public information releases, and the awareness of the importance for compliance with EIA and other health regulations will be raised.
- Begin to implement the recommended 3-Tiered lab concept within each state if possible. Oklahoma has already accomplished this, and Louisiana animal health officials recently met with their lab directors. The other states are currently considering how best to move forward, but agree in principle with the concept.
- The group also prepared at the request of USDA staff how any future cooperative funds might be best utilized in an enhanced program in their state. The suggestions included using funds for surveillance, epidemiology, mapping initiatives, indemnity, and accelerated compliance activities.

On behalf of the Committee, Dr. Becky Brewer of Oklahoma, met with USDA leadership on two occasions late in the summer to further discuss the need for cooperative funds to support EIA programs in the "At-risk" states. The interaction was productive and evidently USDA is at least considering future financial (cooperative funding) support at a limited level to assist those states with some of the activities mentioned above.

Finally, Dr. Brewer has also agreed to accept the EIA-sub-committee chair position, effective the date of this report, contingent upon Committee Chair approval.

The Equine Infectious Anemia Subcommittee introduced one resolution at the 2008 USAHA Annual Meeting. The resolution was approved:

**RESOLUTION 26:**

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) requests that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS), in cooperation with states and the equine industry, such as the American Horse Council, state horse councils, American Association of Equine Practitioners and breed registries, request funding to support an enhanced Equine infectious anemia (EIA) control/eradication program. Three (3) basic components encompass:

Section A: Fund Program

1. USDA-APHIS-VS to incorporate specific elements of the Equine infectious anemia (EIA) Uniform Methods and Rules (UMR) into the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 9, part 75, Communicable diseases in horses, asses, ponies, mules, and zebras, in order to assure that only equines having negative EIA testing status are moved interstate except as described under section 6;
    a. Requests funding for an enhanced EIA control program leading to eradication with new money:
2. At -risk states are to receive focused federal funds in an eradication program; the initial funding emphasis should be in the states with historically higher rates of infection (Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Mississippi); and
3. At-risk states must meet certain minimum standards including: change of ownership testing, minimum 12

month negative test for interstate movement, required euthanasia of reactors (grandfather existing reactors that are isolated), individual permanent identification of tested horses, utilization of a 3-tiered testing system.

Section B: Prevalence Working Group

1. USDA-APHIS-VS should create a national EIA prevalence working group that includes representatives from all "At Risk" states.
2. The EIA prevalence working group would continue collaboration with the National Surveillance Unit (NSU), Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health (CEAH) existing equine prevalence model for:
    a. Identification of industry stakeholders;
    b. Accurate equine census;
    c. Accurate prevalence data;
    d. Consistent case definition – herd vs. head; and
    e. Address other issues as appropriate.

Section C: Diagnostic Laboratory Component

1. USDA-APHIS-VS should adopt national laboratory reporting system for accurate electronic test data.
2. Re-evaluate laboratory certification (moratorium) policy with input from state/federal regulatory authorities and National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL).
3. Utilize and request funding for a 3-tiered laboratory testing system (enzyme linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA), agar gel immunodiffusion (AGID), immunoblot).
4. USDA-APHIS-VS should request funding for the NVSL laboratory system to fully support an expanded program.

**FINAL RESPONSE:**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services (VS) appreciates the United States Animal Health Association's (USAHA) interest in an enhanced equine infectious anemia (EIA) control/eradication program, and we concur with the science and intent of the proposals. We also agree that currently funding for such efforts is not available. Although immediate and long-term budget uncertainties prevent us from making any commitments regarding future funding requests, we will consider USAHA's input in light of the priorities of the new Administration as we formulate future budgets.

VS is drafting a proposed rule that incorporates specific elements of the EIA Uniform Methods and Rules into title 9 of the Code of Federal Regulations, part 75.

VS will continue to work closely with the USAHA Infectious Diseases of Horses (IDOHC) EIA subcommittee. If a specific national EIA prevalence working group is to be developed, it should fall under the purview of the IDOHC EIA subcommittee. VS' National Surveillance Unit (NSU) will continue its close collaboration with the EIA subcommittee in adapting and updating the existing equine prevalence model to include recent equine census data, current testing information, and a review of risk categorization options (i.e., cluster of EIA cases). NSU also will address other issues as appropriate.

The National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) supports a national laboratory reporting system for accurate electronic test data. The moratorium on training personnel for new EIA laboratories has ended. However, due to budgetary issues, NVSL will continue to schedule the same number of EIA training sessions for the foreseeable future and to use the selection criteria that have been reviewed and approved by the USAHA IDOHC EIA subcommittee.

In late May 2009, a memorandum was sent from the NVSL Director to the Regional Directors for distribution to the AVICs and State Veterinarians describing post-moratorium procedures concerning EIA laboratory approval. At the request of the VS Eastern and Western Regional Directors, a VS Equine Infectious Anemia Laboratory Approval Working Group was formed. The working group is composed of veterinarians and epidemiologists from both regions, as well as representatives from the NAHP Equine Program and NVSL. The group has begun to analyze data from the current approved EIA laboratories, review inspection procedures, and consider appropriate laboratory approval criteria, with a view towards establishing a more consistent basis for obtaining and maintaining EIA approved laboratory status throughout the country.

No resolutions were submitted by the EIA Subcommittee at the 2009 USAHA Annual Meeting.