
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 13 APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER: Equine Viral Arteritis International Import Requirements

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Equine Viral Arteritis (EVA) has significantly impacted international trade in equidae and equine semen. The import control policies of most countries currently deny entry to carrier stallions and Equine Arteritis Virus (EAV) infective semen because of the associated disease risks. Currently, the United States (US) is the only major equine-breeding country without an import control policy for EVA.

In a serosurvey conducted as part of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Animal Health Monitoring Systems Equine 1998 study there was a low seroprevalence of EAV infection in most United States equidae as they have never been exposed to the virus. Thus, the vast majority of the US equine population could be considered completely susceptible to natural infection. This was illustrated by the occurrence of a major outbreak of EVA in 2006, primarily in Quarter Horses. The virus spread widely based on shipment of infective semen and dispersal of mares and foals after completion of breeding of mares with infective semen.

The absence of any restrictions on the import of carrier stallions or EAV infective semen into the United States has greatly increased both the likelihood of the virus becoming more widely disseminated in the nation's equine population and the risk of economically damaging outbreaks of EVA. Importations of EAV carrier stallions and infective semen not only augments the number of carrier stallions in the breeding population at large but also increases the potential for disease outbreaks through the introduction of more highly virulent strains of EAV, previously exotic to the country.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services to develop, implement, and enforce Equine Viral Arteritis import testing requirements pertaining to equine semen and stallions in accordance with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Code Chapter for Equine Arteritis Virus infection.

INTERIM RESPONSE:

USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services appreciates the recommendation from USAHA and the opportunity to respond. USDA

APHIS recognizes the concern of the introduction of highly virulent strains of EVA through importation of possible infective equine semen and carrier stallions into our equine domestic population. In accordance with the agreement of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) through the international treaty of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United States must have an active domestic surveillance program and be able to show freedom of disease prior to adopting international import restrictions. Therefore, APHIS recommends establishing a working group with USAHA to review the domestic concerns and develop domestic surveillance program standards.

In addition, APHIS would like to collaborate with USAHA to increase our communication efforts with the US equine industry by developing outreach materials that can be posted on USDA and USAHA websites. These materials will focus on notifying stakeholders of this disease concern and how to prevent the spread of EVA domestically and internationally.