
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 38

APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER: Equine Infectious Anemia and Equine Piroplasmiasis Control Strategies

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Over the past ten years, multiple states have investigated either Equine Piroplasmiasis (EP) and/or Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) in Quarter Horses involved in non-sanctioned race activities. All indications are that transmission and disease introduction is related to management practices, including the use of blood and/or plasma products of non-domestic origin within the equine population, rather than natural transmission by vectors. Additionally, in recent years, an increasing number of illegally imported horses have been identified as positive for EP and/or EIA. The nature of non-sanctioned race events makes tracking infected and exposed horses difficult and serves as a significant barrier to effective epidemiological investigations.

During investigations and while horses are maintained under quarantine or hold order, state animal health officials have determined that in many cases, horses have continued to participate in race events and move interstate despite the quarantine or hold order. Additionally, horse substitutions and horse disappearances are complicating efforts to control these diseases. Failure to permanently identify all cohorts, multiple names for the same horse, alteration of tattoos, communication barriers, and inability to reliably determine ownership complicate the ability of animal health officials to conduct thorough epidemiological investigations.

Identification of horses involved in these disease investigations would be enhanced through the placement of International Organization for Standardization (ISO)-compliant microchips that are recorded in the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal Identification Management System (AIMS) and Emergency Management Response System (EMRS) databases. This permanent identification would serve both immediate and potentially future diseases investigations.

Given the increasing frequency at which disease investigations are being conducted for EP and/or EIA involving quarter horses in non-sanctioned racing, it is only a matter of time until these diseases impact larger equine populations involved in activities such as barrel racing, polo, and other pleasure events.

RESOLUTION:

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 develop strategies for the control of Equine Piroplasmiasis (EP) and Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA). USDA, APHIS, VS should coordinate these strategies with State Animal Health Officials. USAHA further requests that the American Horse Council and other equine stakeholders seek funding to fully support these programs. Further we request USDA-APHIS-VS Animal Disease Traceability funds to maintain an inventory of International Organization for Standardization (ISO)-compliant microchips at the USDA Kansas warehouse to provide to state and federal animal health officials for use in EIA and EP disease investigations.

INTERIM RESPONSE:

USDA, APHIS, VS recognizes the concerns of USAHA and appreciates the opportunity to respond. VS is drafting an Equine Piroplasmiasis (EP) Uniform Standards document to capture the complete strategies, surveillance, and response procedures for control of EP in the United States. Additionally, VS plans to update the 2007 Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) Uniform Methods and Rules to better address the new risk factors and response changes needed in light of the current epidemiology of EIA cases in the United States. We will involve the National Assembly of State Animal Health Officials in the drafting and review of these proposed documents. VS will investigate the mechanisms of purchase and feasibility of establishing an inventory of ISO-compliant equine microchips at the USDA Kansas City warehouse for use by State and Federal animal health officials in responding to cases of EP and EIA.

FINAL RESPONSE:

USDA, APHIS, VS recognizes the concerns of the USAHA and appreciates the opportunity to respond. The VS Equine Health Team will begin drafting an EP Uniform Standards document in the first quarter of fiscal year 2021, which will take up to six (6) months. The document is intended to capture the strategies, surveillance, and response procedures for control of EP in the United States. Additionally, VS plans to redevelop the 2007 EIA Uniform Methods and Rules into a Uniform Standards document to address the new risk factors and response changes needed in light of the current epidemiology of EIA cases in the United States. This Uniform Standards document will be more in line with current naming conventions for these types of documents within VS and there will be no difference between the intent of Uniform Standards versus Uniform Methods and Rules documents, rather it will be an update to the current naming conventions. We will involve the National Assembly of State Animal Health Officials in the drafting and review of these proposed documents.

In August 2020, the VS Equine Health Team purchased 1,250 ISO-compliant 840 equine microchips, which are currently available for use by State and Federal animal health officials in responding to cases of EP and EIA.

