
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 11 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON EQUINE

SUBJECT MATTER: Venezuelan Equine Encephalomyelitis Import Parameters

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

With the recent detection of Venezuelan equine encephalomyelitis (VEE) in Mexico, the United States (US) equine industry is at risk for disease entry and spread. The last VEE outbreak in the US in 1971 resulted in equine mortalities and significant economic impact due to cost of disease prevention and control measures, as well as movement restrictions of US equids. Prompt action by the US to prevent VEE introduction is critical.

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) informs governments of animal disease occurrences, control methods, and related studies and provides a forum to harmonize regulations to facilitate trade in animals and animal products. The OIE chapter on VEE (Chapter 12.11.3) states that veterinary authorities of VEE-free countries may prohibit wild and domestic equine importation and transit through their territories from VEE-infected countries. Free countries may also prohibit the importation of domestic and wild equine oocytes and embryos from VEE-infected countries.

According to the OIE, The Veterinary Authorities of importing countries should require the presentation of an international veterinary certificate attesting that:

1. Vaccinated animals:
 - a. Were vaccinated against VEE not less than 60 days prior to shipment and were clearly identified with a permanent mark at the time of vaccination;
 - b. Were kept in a quarantine station in the country of origin under official veterinary supervision for three weeks prior to shipment and remained clinically healthy during that period; any animal which showed a rise in temperature (taken daily) was subjected to a blood test for virus isolation, with negative results;
 - c. Were protected from insect vectors during transportation to and from the quarantine station and during the quarantine period;
 - d. Showed no clinical sign of VEE on the day of shipment;
2. Unvaccinated animals:
 - a. Were kept in a quarantine station in the country of origin under official veterinary supervision for three weeks prior to shipment and remained clinically healthy during that period; any animal which showed a rise in

- temperature (taken daily) was subjected to a blood test for virus isolation, with negative results;
- b. Were subjected to a diagnostic test for VEE with negative results conducted not less than 14 days after the commencement of quarantine;
 - c. Were protected from insect vectors during transportation to and from the quarantine station and during the quarantine period;
 - d. Showed no clinical sign of VEE on the day of shipment.

In addition, animals may be isolated in the importing country for seven days under official veterinary supervision. Any animal which shows a rise in temperature (taken daily) shall be subjected to a blood test for virus isolation.

The OIE recommendations are science based guidance to ensure the importing countries can protect their animal agricultural industries.

RESOLUTION:

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 implement the following requirements for equids imported from Mexico:

- Equids must be clinically healthy, subject to a blood test for Venezuelan equine encephalomyelitis (VEE) virus detection with negative results a minimum of 14 days prior to importation and show a temperature less than 101.5F and no signs of VEE on the day of shipment.
- Equids must remain under veterinary supervision and remain clinically healthy between blood sampling and day of shipment.
- Any equid showing a rise in temperature shall be subject to a blood test for virus detection for VEE.
- Seven days pre-import and during the seven day import quarantine period equids must remain in a vector free environment. During the entire period, all equids shall be monitored for clinical signs.
- If equids do not appear clinically healthy or if a temperature of 101.5F degrees or greater is detected, equids must be subject to a blood test for virus detection for VEE.
- Additionally, we urge USDA-APHIS-VS to be vigilant in ongoing monitoring of the VEE situation in equids in Mexico and base any future requirements or restrictions on detections in Mexico.

INTERIM RESPONSE:

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

According to title 9, Code of Federal Regulations, section 93.308 (a)(1), equids intended for importation into the United States from countries affected with VEE must undergo a 7-day quarantine. As of July 2021, APHIS revised the import requirements for equids coming into the United States from Mexico from a 3-day quarantine to a 7-day quarantine based on the VEE detection in Mexico. APHIS also implemented a requirement that equids from Mexico that are febrile (101.5F degrees or greater) or

display clinical signs of illness consistent with VEE infection while in quarantine will be subject to a blood test for VEE virus detection. If an importer chooses not to test, or if the test result is non-negative, APHIS will refuse entry to the entire shipment. APHIS is evaluating import requirements for all equids from VEE-endemic countries and will take into consideration the additional recommendations provided from the committee regarding equids imported from Mexico.