

UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION – 2007

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 19 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON INFECTIOUS DISEASES OF HORSES

SUBJECT MATTER: REQUEST FOR SERUM FROM THE NATIONAL ANIMAL HEALTH LABORATORY NETWORK FOR AN EQUINE PIROPLASMOSIS SEROLOGICAL SURVEY

DATES: RENO, NEVADA OCTOBER 18 – 24, 2007

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Equine Piroplasmosis (EP) is currently classified as a Foreign Animal Disease to the United States. However, due to past issues with import testing, the causal agents, *Babesia equi* and/or *Babesia caballi*, possibly exist at some undetermined prevalence level in the country's resident horse population.

Concern over this issue was addressed by way of resolutions in 2006 from the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that was based upon recommendations from the EP Subcommittee of the USAHA committee on the Infectious Diseases of Horses. The major resolution adopted by USAHA advocated conducting a slaughter horse survey to estimate the prevalence or lack thereof of EP infection in the United States (US) resident horse population.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, this is no longer a viable option. The EP Subcommittee met by conference call on July 9, 2007 and discussed alternative strategies for achieving this goal. An alternative discussed and unanimously approved was to make application to the Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health (CEAH) and request that residual sera collected during the 1998 National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) survey be tested by competitive enzyme linked immunosorbent assay (C-ELISA) for the presence of antibodies to EP. The sera would carry no identification (ID) whatsoever as to animal name/numerical ID, premises of origin or state from which they originated.

The outcome of such a survey would help greatly in resolving the current uncertainty regarding the prevalence of EP in the domestic US horse population. If a significant prevalence of EP infection is found in our horse population, then the issue can be responsibly addressed.

Resolution:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) requests that the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) laboratories make available and submit residual banked equine serum samples to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) for testing by competitive enzyme linked immunosorbent assay (C-ELISA) for the presence of antibodies to equine piroplasmosis (EP). The absolute requirement is that all samples submitted for evaluation carry no identification (ID) whatsoever as to animal name/numerical ID, date of collection, premises of origin or the laboratory or state from which they originated.

USAHA also requests the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to determine what constitutes a representative number of samples from the above NAHLN submissions to provide meaningful estimates of the current prevalence of EP in the United States resident horse population or accept the previously statistically recommended number of 15,000 samples and use previously identified funding which was obtained through the slaughter surveillance initiative.

RESPONSE:

USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, 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. APHIS and the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) support this project and are in the process of planning the survey design, development, and implementation as follows:

1. VS will design this national prevalence survey relative to sample size and selection techniques to ensure the anonymity of the samples.
2. Members of the USAHA Equine Piroplasmosis Subcommittee (of the Infectious Diseases of Horses Committee) will assist in finalizing the project design and contacting the National Animal Health Laboratory Network laboratories that are providing samples to be tested.
3. National Veterinary Services Laboratories in Ames, Iowa, will perform all screening tests. As of January 4, 2008, the NVSL has received 3360 samples for this survey. These samples have not yet been tested for equine piroplasmosis. The total number of samples required is still being evaluated and is dependent on the randomness of the samples collected.
4. ARS in Pullman, Washington, will perform all confirmatory tests.
5. VS will oversee and coordinate the final project analysis and report of the results of the survey.