RESOLUTION NUMBER: 22  APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON INFECTIOUS DISEASES OF HORSES

SUBJECT MATTER: EQUINE PIROPLASMOsis - IMPORTATION TESTING

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Equine Piroplasmosis (EP) is classified as a Foreign Animal Disease to the United States. However, it is assumed that the disease exists at some unknown prevalence level in horses that are native to the United States or horses that have been imported into the United States. This assumption is based on the fact that prior to February 1, 2004, the “official test” for Piroplasmosis, conducted on equine animals presented for importation into the United States was the Complement Fixation (CF) test. An upgraded competitive enzyme linked immunosorbent assay (cELISA) test was specified as the “official test” on August 22, 2005, and is highly unlikely to yield “false negative” results on chronically EP infected adult horses.

While the cELISA has a significantly higher sensitivity in detecting the chronically infected EP horse, the sensitivity to detection of the acutely infected horse is much lower when compared to the CF test. Recently, through research and EP disease investigations, there have been cases where acutely EP infected horses have tested negative on the cELISA test but positive on the CF test. As a result, the Equine Piroplasmosis Working Group recommended that the definition of a confirmed case of EP be defined as, “an equid that has tested positive by the National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) with either a complement fixation (CF) test or a competitive enzyme linked immunosorbent assay (cELISA).” This definition was incorporated into domestic policy in Veterinary Services Memorandum 555.20.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services, Veterinary Services, National Center for Import and Export, to require a negative Complement Fixation test and a negative competitive enzyme linked immunosorbent assay test for Equine Piroplasmosis (Theileria equi and Babesia caballi) prior to importation of equids into the United States.

INTERIM RESPONSE:
The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services (VS) concurs with this recommendation. In the second quarter of calendar year 2012, the VS National Center for Import and Export plans to formally incorporate complement-fixation testing into the standard equine import testing protocol, which already includes the competitive enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay. Before implementing this change, VS must notify brokers and importers about the new requirement and associated costs. Further, the National Veterinary Services Laboratories must prepare additional reagents to supply foreign laboratories that conduct preexport screening tests.