

TO: SOCIETÀ ITALIANA VETERINARI PER EQUINI (S.I.V.E.)  
Italy

### **Equine infectious disease reporting**

On behalf of the undersigned organisations we would like to outline our commitment and support for the enhancing of communications and sharing of information on occurrences of significant equine infectious disease between official government veterinary authorities and veterinary representative bodies and equine sector veterinary advisors within EU countries. Most notably we support communications on the occurrence of emerging and/or 'exotic' diseases such as equine infectious anaemia (EIA), equine viral arteritis (EVA), contagious equine metritis (CEM), piroplasmiasis, West Nile virus (WNV), dourine and, should it occur in Europe, African horse sickness (AHS).

Experience from several countries over many years has confirmed our belief that early and open exchange of such information between all interested parties facilitates improved implementation of and compliance with disease control measures, leading to effective control and reduced spread of infection. In the United Kingdom for example, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) considers and undertakes the following activities in disseminating information to the equine industry and/or equine veterinary profession as a matter of routine practice:

1. Immediate notification through agreed channels for all confirmed cases of relevant diseases.
2. Production and publication (online) of Preliminary Outbreak Assessments and Qualitative Risk Analyses.
3. Routine participation in equine disease surveillance reporting.
4. Involvement in convening and consulting Expert Disease Groups.
5. Involvement in convening and consulting an Equine Core Group.
6. Informal discussion with relevant officials and regular attendance at industry meetings.
7. Participation in professional CPD courses.

We believe that this approach also contributes to enhancing subsequent voluntary infectious disease screening such as is recommended by the Horserace Betting Levy Board (HBLB) Codes of Practice and particularly for those diseases in which subclinical persistence of infection occurs in carrier animals (e.g. EIA, EVA, CEM), leading to reduced recurrence.

In some countries the HBLB Codes of Practice are seen as an important part of the armoury of the equine industry in maintaining high disease-free standards. It is our opinion and experience that good communications between government veterinary authorities and veterinary representative bodies and veterinary advisors are pre-requisite to maintaining both national and international confidence in equine sectors operating at overtly higher levels of biosecurity. This has been demonstrated most recently in the United Kingdom with the resumption of sales of Thoroughbreds to India, predicated on assurances of repeated demonstration of disease freedom through adoption of the programme of annual pre-breeding testing stipulated by the HBLB Codes.

In particular, we commend for certain high impact diseases that systems of open and prompt exchange of information both nationally (e.g. from government veterinary authorities to equine industry stakeholders) and internationally (e.g. from government veterinary authorities to the OIE and trading partners) should wherever possible be uniformly adopted within and between countries that undergo international trade in horses.

In particular we note the existence of the established OIE World Animal Health Information Database (WAHID) Interface system that provides an existing, freely accessible mechanism for disseminating such information and the existence of associated mechanisms in which such disease notifications are reviewed and passed on through other disease reporting surveillance networks (e.g. ProMED-Mail, RESPE, International Collating Centre, Defra etc.). However, as with all systems this mechanism is only as good as the information that is provided to it.

We hope that in future that organisations representing equine veterinary practitioners throughout Europe can benefit from improved exchange of information on the occurrence of significant equine infectious diseases widely within Europe and beyond.

Yours sincerely



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*Animal Health Trust, International Collating Centre and Defra/AHT/BEVA Equine Quarterly Disease Surveillance Reports*  
on behalf of

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