



USAHA News Release

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For immediate release:

HORSE DISEASE COMMITTEE ADDRESSES WIDE RANGE OF TOPICS

Reno, Nev., Oct. 22, 2007 - Equine infectious anemia (EIA) was one of several topics discussed at the meeting of the U.S. Animal Health Association (USAHA) Committee on Infectious Diseases of Horses here this week.

It was noted that progress had been made in data compilation and analysis under the National Animal Health Reporting System (NAHRS) with respect to EIA. Improvements to the existing system are anticipated to be implemented before the end of 2007. This will enable national data on EIA to be summarized on a monthly basis.

Reference was also made to a paper presented earlier at the scientific session that proposed a series of new approaches to EIA control. This would involve embracing more targeted testing to identify carriers in untested equid populations; greater efficiency and accuracy in diagnostic testing; and regionalization of states with equivalent infection status in order to minimize the frequency of testing required for horses moving between those states.

A new and “emerging” disease also received attention at the committee meeting. An overview of equine herpes myeloencephalopathy covered information on the emerging significance of the disease, the unique characteristics of its mutant strain, advances in diagnostic testing, and prospects for prevention through vaccination. Another report to the committee on this disease concluded that it met the criteria for a potentially emerging infectious disease.

A disease is considered “emerging” when it meets at least one of three criteria: (1) the disease is identified for the first time; (2) the disease changes in virulence, host range or other pathogen behavior; or (3) the disease changes in geographic range or incidence within a range. The current situation with respect to equine herpes myeloencephalopathy outbreaks reflects a change in the virulence and behavior of the causal virus. During 2007, the disease was the focus of presentations at meetings of both the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine and the American Horse Council.

Other topics receiving attention during the committee session included import rules for contagious equine metritis (CEM); an outbreak of equine influenza in Australia; and equine piroplasmiasis (EP).

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