

Notes of the UK Equine Disease Coalition meeting
Wednesday 15th November 2023
Via Zoom online platform

Anastasia Georgaki (AG) DAERA	Gosia Siwonia (GS) Welsh Government
Liz Kelly (LK) World Horse Welfare	Keith Meldrum (KM) observer
Roxane Kirton (RK) RSPCA	Richard Newton (RN) Cambridge University
Ben Mayes (BM) clinical practitioner	Roly Owers (RO) World Horse Welfare – Chair
Chris Bain (CB) Scottish Government	Charlotte Smith (CS) DAERA
David Mountford (DM) BEVA	Sally Taylor (ST) British Horseracing Authority
Estevao Simoes (ES) Scottish Government	Annabel Henderson (AH) Scottish Government
Sara Higgins (SH) APHA	

1. RO welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Helen Roberts (Defra) and Jane Nixon (British Horse Foundation).
2. Notes of the previous meeting – Wed 10 May – were agreed as an accurate record.
3. Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda
 - a. Equine Movements Template (carried forward since 2019). This template is intended to help event organisers by providing information to help trace horses moving on and off showgrounds. The aim is to help clarify and minimise equine control measures. SH has been in contact with Andy Paterson – this initiative will be taken forward by a colleague for action by Christmas 2023 and should be left on agenda for updates.
4. Terms of Reference (ToR). Approved with no changes.
5. Disease update (see attached presentation from RN)
 - a. Equine influenza. 14 outbreaks in the UK since the last meeting reflecting the endemic situation, with one case pending confirmation. Internationally, reports received from North America, Europe and Libya. CS reported that on the Irish Equine Veterinary Association plan to discuss vaccination for EI with the various Sports Horse Sales in Ireland, to encourage mandatory vaccination before a horse is allowed to enter the sale. These plans are in the very early stages but are a promising development, with a view to requiring EI vaccination before animals enter sales. BM commented that at his recent attendance at sales in Wexford, numbers were down and little evidence of vaccination. However, sales and horse owners were approachable, and it would be worth discussing with Hugh Dillon, the vet carrying out the vettings, on vaccination work.
 - b. Equine Herpes Virus. RN reported 14 neurological EHV-1 outbreaks in North America, no outbreaks linked to FEI events, with single reports from Europe (France, Sweden and UK). On vaccination requirements, he believed that in France racing and trotting events require vaccination and in Germany sport horses also require it and discussions continue within other national federations for sports horses. However, there are some concerns with vaccine efficacy and availability.
 - c. African Horse Sickness. No further information on South Africa assurance visit. **Action SH** to follow up. It was noted that AHS has been placed on the UK Gov Risk Register. **Action SH** to let group know the significance of this and whether anything will change as a result. RN commented that it is good to see AHS on the Register. Bluetongue (BTV-3) has recently been

confirmed in a single beef animal in Kent (investigations continuing) with midge believed as source sometime in Sept/Oct – so vectors are active. BTV-3 is present in mainland Europe, including recently in the Netherlands.

- d. West Nile Virus. SH reported that the regional pilot in the previous minutes referred to the updating of the Ops Manual/CAD training, to understand if this had improved the system for PVSs to report. A pilot is not currently being set up to bypass OVs having to call APHA first before testing for WNV. RN said that this was disappointing and not his understanding as this was probably not sufficient to help practitioners – the updates mentioned should not need piloting regionally and he thought it may be difficult to properly assess the impacts from this. **Action SH** to speak to Helen Roberts and report back.
 - e. CEM. No new reports. However, one UK case (Nottinghamshire) has not yet been resolved, as reflected on the WOA events management website. SH said that this case was currently still in discussion with Defra legal and Local Authorities and not yet able to be closed.
 - f. Other. RN drew attention to the most recent Equine Quarterly Disease Surveillance Report, which contains an article on West Nile Virus, including details on the three licensed WNV - vaccines licensed in the UK and highlights the issue on on-going non-availability of Equip Artervac (EVA) vaccine from Zoetis.
6. Regulatory update
- a. Review of equine disease control legislation. No update available. **Action RO** to contact Helen Roberts for further information.
 - b. Target Operating Model. DM gave an update on this work. There is good engagement between government and industry, with Sevington the focus, coordinated by the British Horse Council. Currently the practicalities of the new import inspection regime being in place by October 2024 are being discussed – including facility design, operating hours of BCPs and the practical requirements for any inspections – from paperwork checks, to identity check, to full physical inspections. Discussions ongoing between CVOs around requirements for High Health horses. BHC is keen to speak to all relevant officials in Scotland and Wales to discuss pragmatic challenges.

ES confirmed that Scottish and Welsh Governments work together on animal health and welfare aspects of the TOM. Policy is devolved but GB is usually a single epidemiological unit, so all GB administrations have convergent interests. Appreciate there may be safety reasons and industry preference for not unloading animals, and these which are taken into account when formulating the policy, but legally a sufficient level of inspection is required as set out in the Official Controls Regulations and a physical check may mean different things depending on the situation.

- c. Equine ID and CED. DM reported on this with regard to England. Activity has now stalled somewhat, with legal discussions on fixed penalty notices. The plan to lay the legislation in Q1 2024 may be delayed.

BM raised the issue of over stamping of passports of horses with overseas passports brought into the UK. Many owners continue to be unaware of this requirement and there has been little sector communication on this issue. DM agreed that this had been an issue for some time, but the change to the digital first system will help as currently there is no carrot or

stick for owners to comply. DM also noted that the hope is that the new system will allow imported horses to be registered on the CED without the need to involve a UK PIO.

- d. Welfare in Transport. No activity here. DM reported that portions of the original proposals had been challenged by industry. RO said that EU have looked at welfare in transport and while some of their other regulatory welfare work had been stopped, there was a prospect of a review of the welfare in transport legislation.
- e. Live exports ban. RO reported on a recent meeting of World Horse Welfare with the Defra Bill team on the Live Export Ban Bill, which is planned to be taken through Parliament in early 2024, working with Scottish and Welsh Governments. However, enforcement of the equine ban will be delayed compared to other species as equine movements are complicated and the new digital ID system is needed.

KM raised the concern of how this will work in practice as there is still a loophole of horses being exported (not for slaughter) and then moved on for slaughter in importing country. RO agreed that this is tricky and intelligence sharing is very important for enforcement and still to be defined.

- f. Other – Licensing livery yards consultation Scotland. CB provided an update as below:
The consultation on our proposals to introduce statutory licensing in Scotland for a number of animal care services, including livery services, closed on 26 September. Animal Welfare team are currently analysing all the responses received and we will publish a consultation summary report in due course. Until we discuss with the Minister, we are not at this time able to confirm what legislative proposals will be taken forward.

7. EU-GB/NI trade. Nothing to report.

8. Equine Medicines.

- a. Supply issues. Artervac vaccine supply issues have not yet been resolved and are likely to run until October 2024. RN is working with various industry bodies as there is unlikely to be a vaccine for stallions ahead of the next breeding season. He is attending a second meeting on 20 Nov, organised by the manufacturer to discuss proposals for a way forward. DM praised RN's work on trying to find a solution to this and asked anyone present who would attend the meeting to support RN's proposals.

DM had met with the VMD at an all-species meeting to discuss general medicine and vaccine supply issues. There are problems with vaccines within all species and it is seen as a global issue. It was felt by attendees at the meeting that the 'just in time' system by vaccine manufacturers is not working. The UK equine market is small with little influence. Discussions continue.

- b. Presentation on survey carried by Animal and Environment AMR Delivery Group. **Action GS** to bring forward to next meeting.

9. AOB. AG raised the forthcoming change under EU legislation on the requirement for animal health visits by vets to farms with food production animals and whether is this being discussed for horses. LK said that BVA have been working on this and their understanding is that it would apply to horses. The issue is with export of horsemeat where meat will come from different sources and often through dealers. BM confirmed that a system already exists for export of live horses as a letter will go to the source of the horses confirming inspection having been carried

out and that biosecurity on premises is in order. ST said that racehorses have health checks prior to export. AG's concern is that this new inspection requirement applies to the premises not the individual animals.

AG is preparing an article on equine disease surveillance and will send to EDC in due course.

10. Date of next virtual meeting – 9.30am on Wed 22 May 2024 on Teams.