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**REPORT FOLLOWING THE SEVENTH MEETING OF THE ‘HORSE IMPORT EXPORT TASK TEAM’ HELD TELEPHONICALLY ON WEDNESDAY 28TH OCTOBER 2015**

Following the changes in industry structures, The Horse Import Export Task Team (HIETT) was formed to replace the Import Export Working Group with the first meeting held on Monday 11th August 2014. The task team has met once a quarter since. The HIETT is made up of veterinary representatives from DAFF, Western Cape Veterinary Services, Wits Health Consortium (Equine Health Fund), SA Equine Veterinary Association (SAEVA), ERC (Equine Research Centre), SA Equestrian Federation (SAEF). Additional veterinary/non veterinary members will be co-opted when necessary. Dr Beverley Parker is the elected chairperson with Mrs N-J Freeman as secretary.

**TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE HIETT:**

1. To exchange information on equine diseases in South Africa with emphasis on trade and international movement of horses;
2. To assess the practical problems of surveillance, control and eradication of infectious diseases of equines in South Africa;
3. To assist with scientific guidance on the development of policies relating to control of equine diseases with the potential to affect trade in equines;
4. To assist with improving the collection, use and interpretation of statistical information on equine diseases in South Africa to facilitate disease reporting.

The following is a short summary of salient points that were discussed at the seventh meeting on the 28th October 2015:

1. **African horse sickness(AHS) Vaccines**

There is no evidence of a repeat of the problems experienced last year in terms of AHS vaccine supply, although some veterinarians have complained about the method of distribution via Bayer and UTI. The complaints are receiving attention from the vaccine supplier, Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP).

1. **AHS Surveillance Reports**

* Serology Report August 2014 – August 2015: All samples up to August 2015 had been tested and results logged. Dr John Grewar is collating the report.
* Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) Report August 2014 – August 2015: All samples up to end August 2015 had been tested and results logged. Dr John Grewar is collating the report.
* Monthly Surveillance Reports: Reports will be issued monthly by Dr John Grewar and will include a methods paragraph and maps.

1. **AHS RT-PCR Validation**

All validation testing has been completed for the test developed at the ERC and there have been no issues with robustness. A dossier for evaluation will be submitted to the OIE Biological Standards Commission by mid-January 2016.

1. **UAE Visit**

A UAE delegation visited South Africa in June 2015 to assess the control of African horse sickness in South Africa. The delegation is awaiting the outcome of the RT-PCR test validation.

1. **Risk Assessment**

A Risk Assessment on the export of African horse sickness from South Africa was prepared by a team lead by Dr Evan Sergeant of AusVet. The risk assessment was presented at ISVEE (International Symposium of Veterinary Epidemiology and Economics) in Mexico in November 2015.

1. **Olympic Bid**

There is no confirmation from the Department of Sport and Recreation that South Africa will bid to host the Olympics in 2024. The implications of African horse sickness (AHS) on the Equestrian Olympics will need to be carefully considered.

1. **Import of horses from neighbouring countries**

Direct movement from a neighbouring country to the AHS Controlled Areas (CA) is not permitted. In order to enter the AHS CA a 40 day residency in the AHS infected zone of SA or a minimum of a 14 day stopover in a registered facility with a negative RT- PCR test for AHS is required. The Veterinary Import Permit (VIP) application form has changed to include details of the stopover quarantine for horses moving from a neighbouring country into the AHS CA.

1. **Reporting of AHS cases by laboratories to a central point**

In addition to the mandatory reporting of all suspect cases of AHS and all AHS laboratory results (positive and negative) to the state vet, appeals are being made to each of the provinces with regard to the additional reporting of AHS laboratory results to a central point.

1. **Import of horses from the USA – Vesicular Stomatitis**

DAFF are finalising changes to the Veterinary Import Permit (VIP) for horses from the USA. Input on the clause regarding Vesicular Stomatitis was requested. The HIETT has not seen the final draft but DAFF agreed that any changes to Veterinary Import Permits would be handled in a timeous and transparent manner to minimise trade disruptions.

1. **Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM)**

* Pregnant mare quarantine testing: DAFF confirmed that the current protocol lists bacterial culture as the test required for clearance of mares and foals in pregnant mare quarantine. Problems have been experienced with culture in terms of delayed transportation, samples getting lost en route etc. Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute (OVI) have confirmed that they will receive and test samples for CEM culture 7 days a week as long as prior arrangements are made. DAFF require all samples from pregnant mare quarantine to be tested by both culture and RT-PCR and registration of facilities will depend on the ability to comply. The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for pregnant mare quarantine facilities will include strict instructions regarding testing.
* DAFF agreed to discuss and report on closing the CEM outbreaks and submit a report to the OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health). Substantial information has been gained from the Equine Research Centre (ERC). Ongoing stallion screening is required to underpin a future claim of country freedom.
* Studbook have had resistance from several breed societies regarding the costs associated with the annual CEM screening of stallions. A meeting between DAFF and relevant breed societies has been arranged for 18th November 2015.
* CEM in semen has been identified as a problem. Industry needs to ensure there is a current negative CEM certificate for donor stallions at the time of semen collection.
* If there is continued resistance to stallion screening from certain breed societies, it may be necessary for individual breed societies e.g. the thoroughbred industry, to appoint a project leader to evaluate the risk of CEM in the thoroughbred population and establish a code of practise for CEM in the thoroughbred population, as is done in the UK.

### Taylorella asinigenitalis (CEM in a donkey)

The ERC identified *T. asinigenitalis* via RT-PCR in an imported donkey jack during post arrival quarantine. The organism had not been picked up during pre-export testing in the country of origin. The donkey was successfully treated at the veterinary faculty. Credit must go to Prof Guthrie for the identification and successful treatment- i.e. the introduction of “donkey CEM” into South Africa was prevented.

## European Union (EU) Protocol

June 2016 will mark 2 years after the last outbreak of AHS in the AHS controlled area. A task team will be formed to prepare for a probable Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) audit ahead of an application to reinstate direct exports from South Africa to the EU.

## Import from Zimbabwe to South Africa

Horses from Zimbabwe have to be tested for Surra, which is an emerging disease worldwide, prior to importation into SA. Testing can be done at the OVI.

## DAFF approval of laboratories

The previous DAFF Approval program was terminated at the end of 2014. SANAS Accreditation is a requirement for all laboratories testing for controlled and notifiable diseases..SANAS accredited laboratories will then be visited by the DAFF audit team to monitor various requirements of DAFF, including bio-safety and bio-security. A certificate of approval will be issued by DAFF if requirements have been met. Results for controlled and notifiable animal disease from laboratories without DAFF approval will not be accepted. Laboratories may apply to the Director for dispensation should they have temporary challenges in complying with the current requirements.

1. **Vaccination permissions in the CA outside the 1 June – 31 October period**

Applications for permission from the Director of Animal Health to vaccinate for AHS in the CA outside the restricted period must follow a detailed protocol and include valid reasons to support the application.