

Notes of the 'UK Equine Disease Coalition' meeting
Thursday 8th November 2018
BHA, 75 High Holborn, London WC1V 6LS

Attendance:

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| Shane Collins SC (DAERA) | Roly Owers RO (World Horse Welfare) |
| Eleanor Glendenning EG (Defra) | Helen Roberts HR (APHA) |
| Liz Kelly LK (World Horse Welfare) | Simon Rolfe SR (Welsh Government) |
| Ben Mayes BM (FEEVA) | Josh Slater JS (RVC/Horse Trust) |
| Keith Meldrum KM (World Horse Welfare) | Sinead Thompson ST (DAERA) |
| Richard Newton RN (AHT) | |

External attendees: Javier Castillo-Olivares JCO (Cambridge University)
 Sarah Shanks (APHA)

Apologies:

Nadine Arber NA (Scottish Government), Mark Bowen (BEVA), Alastair George AG (APHA), Gordon Hickman (Defra)

1. RO welcomed everyone to the meeting especially the first time attendees: Shane Collins and Sinead Thompson (DAERA), Simon Rolfe (Welsh Government) and Sarah Shanks (APHA). RO expressed the meeting's condolences to SC and ST following the death of Sam Nelson in the summer.
2. Notes on the previous meeting – Thu 10 May – were agreed as an accurate record.
3. Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.
 - a. AHS vaccine research update: JCO reviewed the key developments to date, referencing the update provided by John McEwen, from an International Horse Sport Confederation (IHSC) perspective, prior to the meeting. The IHSC established an expert group to advise on the best way forward (this group had engaged Dr Baptiste Dungu as an independent expert) and the group's conclusions are due to be considered by an IHSC meeting in Hong Kong in December. JCO had stepped back from any involvement with this group given his ongoing work in this area. JCO also advised that he is aware of a possible Dubai initiative working on an inactivated vaccine.
 - b. BBSRC support for AHS vaccine development. Reviewing RN's previous letter to the Veterinary Record in 2016 it was agreed that highlighting the importance of sustained investment from the BBSRC in AHS vaccine research was vital. Following discussion all agreed that there would still be real value in writing to the Minister, copying in the CVO. **RN to action**
KM's draft PQ was considered. It was agreed to reference the forthcoming FVO visit to South Africa. **KM to action**
 - c. DARD strategy development. SC/ST reported that Deloitte Consulting had been appointed to undertake an economic analysis of the Northern Ireland equine sector. This work was ongoing and is involving discussions with an equine liaison group that has membership from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and will inform any future strategy.
 - d. CEM control. RO confirmed that there were 33 OV's on the BEVA list and that there was fairly good geographic spread. Additional vets could be added fairly quickly. APHA are currently carrying out a review of the Operations Manual and will update their instructions to government vets.

4. Terms of Reference (ToR). RO outlined the proposed amendments to the ToR, making more explicit reference to the devolved administrations and the function of the Coalition to act as Defra's Exotic Disease Core Group. The amendments were agreed and it was suggested that the role of the Core Group should be expanded in the ToR. **EG/RO to action**
5. Regulatory update
 - a. Equine ID and CED. KM outlined the situation to date including the (inevitable) teething problems with the CED (especially relating to the transfer of PIO data), a successful meeting between Defra and Stephen Potter to discuss many of these issues and an ongoing issue with a Welsh PIO. Whilst there were still some significant challenges, overall good progress was being made. KM confirmed that the situation with regards to recording semi-feral IDs on the CED appears to have been resolved but there is still an issue with the sale of semi-ferals at auction markets, which he will be taking forward with Defra.
 - b. Traceability design user group. No significant developments since last meeting.
 - c. Animal Health Regulation (AHR). HR updated the meeting on latest progress – meetings were continuing most recently focusing on disease control measures, movement and surveillance. There is an internal Defra challenge with different teams attending these meetings and also staff turnover due to many being reallocated to Brexit related roles. LK noted the significant input that the sector had had into the draft regulations relating to equine ID, where John Briggs was lead within Defra. HR encouraged the sector to maintain pro-active engagement with Defra as given the current situation consultation may not always be as effective as it should be. KM queried the situation on the registration of equine premises and their movement between premises, which has yet to be discussed.
 - d. Animal Welfare (Licencing of activities involving animals) (England) Regulations 2018. RO outlined the ongoing issues with regards to the flawed guidance that had been produced to support this new legislation including reference to never keeping your horse in a hot car and requiring all riding schools to have a 20x40m riding arena. There was a more general problem in that so much of the guidance was obligatory rather than permissive. A meeting at Defra with RCVS, British Horse Council and Local Authority representation has been arranged for 13 Nov to look to resolve this situation.
6. Biosecurity and behaviour change. LK outlined latest progress and stressed how helpful Caroline Crew (Horse Trust funded PhD student at AHT) continues to be. The online survey to horse owners secured 2,300 valid responses and this data is still being reviewed. Following discussions with the Behavioural Insights (BI) team it was agreed to move to a 'pay as you go' basis to limit costs. As a result it was decided to replace the focus groups with a number (20+) yard visits and a protocol (questionnaire) for these visits was currently being developed. The visits would be carried out by World Horse Welfare, Redwings and BHS representatives. Potential areas to explore included quarantine facilities, advice for yard visitors and developing health protocols (e.g. strangles testing, stable cleaning, regular temperature checking). BM noted that a key reason yards don't quarantine horses on arrival is due to concerns of horses being 'isolated' and breaking through fences etc. – and his practice often recommended the use of a 'sacrificial' pony to act as a companion for new arrivals (but it was noted the potential risk that the pony posed to the new arrivals). The aim is to complete the yard visits in early 2019 that will aim to identify the best potential behaviour change initiatives.
7. Equine medicines.
 - a. VMD planning on no-deal Brexit scenario. LK reported on the 28 Sep meeting, which was broadly pretty positive, which highlighted how proactive the VMD are being about a no-deal scenario. In the event of a 'no deal' all sharing of common systems and exchange of data would cease on 29 Mar. VMD efforts are to ensure independent systems are ready to

replace the EU regulatory network. There was good industry representation but little push-back.

- b. NOAH Conference. LK also reported on this event on 30 Oct. Overall this had a far less positive feel – with key concerns including medicine availability, need for repeat testing of medicines, border delays and effect on minor use products (including equine medicines). Other concerns were the potential shortage in supply of approximately 14 vet medicines (not identified) and the loss of the major role played by the UK.

8. Disease update

- a. EI. RN reviewed the proposal to harmonise EI vaccination rules, which had received BHA and BEVA support. Following a meeting with the British Horse Council on 25 Oct it was decided to pitch the proposal to the CEOs of the BEF member disciplines on 3 Dec. The Irish and French racing authorities are also being approached about the proposal.
- b. WNV. HR highlighted what an unusual year it had been with the hot summer temperatures across Europe increasing insect numbers and leading to an increase in WNV cases in horses. Disease had been detected in Germany (in wild birds) and there was a potential case involving a vet (who had carried out post-mortems on dead birds). The disease primarily remains a problem for Romania, Bulgaria, Italy, Spain and Portugal. Defra have not amended the WNV risk level, in part because the routes of migrating wild birds is unlikely to include the UK. HR also noted the Public Health England work studying UK mosquito populations – and were looking at vector control programmes, human case protocol and an equine disease control strategy. A number of suitable vectors had been identified in the south of England. RN noted that equines were a dead-end host for WNV and that there were 2 vaccines available on the market. BM reported more owners requesting vaccination when competing in Spain. RN confirmed that the level of WNV testing is included in the BEVA/Defra/AHT quarterly report, but remains low, and that WNV testing is now allowed in differential diagnosis for neurological cases without the need to report suspect disease.

9. Update from related groups/initiatives

- a. Animal Health and Welfare Board for England. Nothing significant to report.
- b. Equine Stakeholder Group for Scotland. Next meeting 27 Nov.
- c. British Horse Council. RO noted how involved Council members had been in the plethora of consultations over the past few months and the recent meeting with Defra on 25 Oct regarding no-deal planning – see 9f below.
- d. AHT Equine Industry Committee. Last met on 5 Sep. RN noted that the Code of Practice meeting also took place on 5 Sep – and that the next updates will include the new CEM protocol.
- e. BVA Medicines Group. RO said that this had been included following an exchange between MB and the BVA – following a query on the revised EU Veterinary Medicines Directive relating to the new cascade that appears to limit importation of medicines from 3rd countries to medicines that are licensed in that country for that species/indication – discussions ongoing.
- f. EU-exit planning. RO noted the House of Lords EU Energy and Environment Sub-Committee report (Brexit: plant and animal biosecurity) – the Coalition had responded to this consultation and this was referenced in the report.
LK reported that Pamela Thompson and John Briggs had led on the 25 Oct meeting at the AHT. It was no-deal focused and they confirmed that the UK application to become a Third Country was being prepared – and that the sector had offered to help review this application. Other key points included:
 - There were no planned changes for animal imports compared to the current arrangements

- Registered horses being exported would require a health certificate and a passport
- Non-registered horses being exported would require a health certificate, passport and a government approved ID document (but still unclear how this will work)

The huge challenge of securing enough OV's to cope with the exponential increase in export certification was discussed. Key points raised included:

- Following the expiry of the deadline for all OV's with previous grandfather rights to revalidate it appears that the number of OV's had declined by two-thirds. Anecdotal evidence indicates that many of those did not revalidate because they had no interest in doing so. There still might be some value in seeing if this window could be reopened
- OV training had been outsourced by Defra (to Improve International) – and it would appear that there had been a significant increase in costs for the training
- Potentially BEVA could play a role in OV training relating to equines
- There could be potential in simplifying OV training for those only completing export certificates
- Following the Budget announcement of allocating further funds to no-deal planning there could be a possibility of lobbying for funds to assist with the training of OV's – possibly in relation to supporting smaller veterinary practices

It was agreed that there would be value in writing to the Minister to highlight our concerns on the recruitment of adequate numbers of OV's. **KM to action**

10. AOB. No matters raised.

11. Date of next meeting – Thu 23 May – central London (venue tbc).