

**Notes of the 'UK Equine Disease Coalition' meeting**  
**Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019**  
**BHA, 75 High Holborn, London WC1V 6LS**

Attendance:

Mark Bowen MB (Nottingham University)  
Marion Collins MC (Scottish Government) \*  
Shane Collins SC (DAERA)  
Alastair George AG (APHA)  
Eleanor Glendenning EG (Defra)  
Liz Kelly LK (World Horse Welfare)

Richard Newton RN (AHT)  
Andy Paterson APa (APHA)  
Roly Owers RO (World Horse Welfare) – Chair  
Stefan Craus SCr (Welsh Government) \*  
\* – by telephone

External attendees:

Christine Knight (APHA), Amanda Piggot AP (BHA)

Apologies:

Gordon Hickman GH (Defra), Ben Mayes BM (FEEVA), Helen Roberts HR (Defra), Josh Slater JS (Horse Trust)

1. RO welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the BHA for hosting. It was agreed that AP would join the Coalition. It was noted that Francesca Compostella had moved on from the RSPCA and that the charity are currently restructuring the equine side of their operations – RO will keep on liaising with Caroline Allen (CVO at the RSPCA) to identify a new representative to join the Coalition. RO also noted that he is due to contact David Mountford to discuss BEVA representation on the group – and with Linda Evans to discuss Donkey Sanctuary representation.

RO also noted that the Defra Civil Service were in a period of purdah in advance of the forthcoming General Election, which will prevent any discussion around ongoing or future Defra policy.

2. Notes on the previous meeting – Thu 23 May – were agreed as an accurate record.
3. Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.
  - a. AHS vaccine update. RO said that he remained in contact with the FEI, who still sound positive about work on developing an effective vaccine, but little detail is known. RN noted that there was also an inactivated vaccine being produced in Dubai through Ulrich Wernery – and RO also noted that the Hong Kong Jockey Club are also investing in a South African produced vaccine.
  - b. BBSRC support for AHS vaccine development. RN said that this issue had rather been overtaken by events – initially dealing with the Equine Influenza outbreaks and then the uncertain political landscape. It was agreed to review post General Election.
4. Terms of Reference (ToR). RN suggested two additions to the Annex relating to:
  - Making reference to equine gatherings and their associated transport under the mixing of animals heading
  - Referencing the impact on vector populations with environmental change under the global issues heading. SCr noted the Defra/APHA led contingency plan on UK vector borne disease (a One Health initiative produced in association with Public Health England) that should be published before the year-end. **EG to circulate when published**An updated version of the ToRs will be circulated. **RO to action**

## 5. Disease update

### a. Equine Influenza. RN provided an update as follows:

- A 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of cases arose in May and peaked in the last week of June – this would appear to be associated with equine movements/events. In total there have been 227 outbreaks (many of these involve multiple animals) – with some serious cases including deaths reported
- ~11% of outbreaks involved disease in vaccinated animals – involving all 3 current vaccines on the market – but vaccination did still provide protection – reducing significance of clinical signs and virus shedding
- Somewhat belatedly many equine events took the issue more seriously – some cancelling events others requiring more stringent vaccination histories
- Situation has now returned to low levels – with only 1 report in October and 1 (month to date) in November – both in imported unvaccinated animals
- Situation in UK mirrored in several countries across Europe although fewer outbreaks had been reported in other countries
- There will be an informal meeting of the OIE expert surveillance panel to further review whether any recommendations should be made regarding EI vaccines. The panel had reviewed this at their annual meeting in April and concluded that there was insufficient evidence to recommend a Florida Clade 1 strain update

#### General discussion included:

- BHA – AP reported that at the October meeting of European Racing Regulators it was decided:
    - Keep 2019 requirement for booster vaccination within 9 months of race day
    - To consult on moving to a primary vaccine schedule made up of intervals of 21-60 days and 120-180 days – and then a booster every 6 months – from 2021
  - RO noted that BEF member bodies – including the Olympic disciplines – had decided to hold off making any changes to their regulations until racing had decided on a way forward
  - SC noted that there had been 1 outbreak reported in Northern Ireland – and that cases had also been reported in the Republic of Ireland – including one outbreak in Thoroughbreds (TBs) and another in non-TBs affecting over 80 animals
- b. Equine Viral Arteritis. EG acknowledged the group's input into the Defra 'lessons learned' exercise from 2019 EVA cases. RN reported that there had been 1 further case in Shropshire reported – and that this stallion has since been castrated. It was noted that the affected stallion in Devon was named in August (under the 1995 EVA Order) and the 2 stallions remaining in Dorset (one had been exported to Spain) were under breeding and movement restrictions.
- c. Equine Infectious Anaemia. RO referenced the EIA Control Strategy that had been circulated by EG following input from the group over the summer. EG noted that this was the first formal strategy produced by Defra on EIA and pulled together adopted policy over time, including on approaches to animal tracings, with the approach being more risk-based.
- d. West Nile virus (WNV). AG said that there was a dedicated form and accompanying guidance notes for veterinary surgeons submitting WNV exclusion samples on Vet Gateway (accessed via the 'Submission forms' link in the popular links box on the right hand side).
- e. Strangles. RN reported that the Horse Trust funded Surveillance of Equine Strangles (SES) project was being extended into a four year PhD project – including an online resource

drawing in data from UK labs that would be launching soon. Genome sequencing is also being carried out by the Sanger Institute to assess any epidemiological links between strains of the bacteria. RN also noted that the Swedish subunit vaccine should be launched in 2020.

- f. Glanders. SCr reported on post-import investigations in Wales following confirmation of Glanders in Kuwait that were put under voluntary restrictions and have since been cleared. These animals were part of the 14 horses that have come into the UK from Kuwait in the past 6 months. There was limited information available on the premises of origin and quarantine centres in Kuwait and as such contact with the infected premises could not be completely ruled out. Defra had been liaising with the Welsh Government on this situation and carrying out post-import investigations into the ten horses imported into England. In tracing the animals SCr noted how little the new owners seemed to know about the history of their recently purchased animals. EG said that there will be no imports of equines from Kuwait into the UK for at least 6 months after destruction of the last infected animal. Public Health authorities had been made aware as glanders is a zoonotic disease.

## 6. Regulatory update

- a. Annual Review of the Contingency Plan for Exotic Notifiable Diseases in England. The updated plan, previously circulated by RO, was noted.
- b. Equine ID and CED. LK reported that:
- New Equine ID regulations were now live in all 4 countries but there was still confusion around the fine wording of the regulations – especially around deadlines for application and issuing of passports – and urged close communication between the administrations on this issue
  - The digital stable of the Central Equine Database (CED) had been trialled – the owner registration system had worked very smoothly – but almost all records needed to be amended by owners. Updating records on the CED – problems with the coordination between PIOs, the CED and owners remains a critical outstanding issue to be resolved
  - The digital Scottish cattle herdbook system was mentioned as an example of a success
  - Minimum Operating Standards (MOPs) for PIOs still needed to be updated by Defra – World Horse Welfare had provided feedback to Defra and this had been acknowledged
  - An interim solution for the 2019 Dartmoor sales had been approved by Defra – but a longer-term digital solution still needs to be found
- MB noted the ongoing issue from the 2015/262 Regulation regarding the treatment of young foals without passports with drugs from the essentials list – and that a resolution is currently working its way through the European Parliament.
- c. Animal Health Regulation. LK reported that it had been quiet on this front over the past few months and we await the outcome of the public consultations on the Delegated Act Implementing Regulations (inc. Equine ID and registration of premises).
- d. Animal Welfare (Licencing of activities involving animals) (England) Regulations 2018. RO to follow up with BM on templates for biosecurity plans and individual health plans for each equine on equine establishments. **RO to action**
- e. Traceability Design User Group (TDUG). LK reported that this was progressing – with cattle database the first to be established. Equine Register had been successful in securing the contract for integration of different data sets of existing databases.
- f. Proposed Licencing of Sanctuaries and Rehoming Centres in England, Scotland & Wales. The proposals are at a different stage in each country. The driver behind this proposed legislation was 3<sup>rd</sup> party puppy sales – but the equine sector is pushing for this to include equine sanctuaries and rehoming centres.

7. EU Exit. LK reported that the 'No Deal' planning sessions had been restarted in August but were now on hold. The group reiterated its view that the engagement from Defra and APHA during this planning period had been excellent.
8. Biosecurity Behaviour Change Project. LK updated on the latest progress with this project. The Livery Yard visits had been completed involving yards in England, Scotland and Wales – thanks to the support of the Blue Cross, BHS (including BHS Scotland), Redwings and World Horse Welfare. The survey carried out before the visits had indicated that many owners did not know how to take their horse's temperature – the interviews highlighted a fear of taking temperatures. There seemed to be good understanding about the relevance of quarantine of new arrivals but also significant barriers. From the yard owners perspective this related to stables being empty (lost revenue) and for owners it related to the social contact time for their animals.

Next steps are to discuss the results with the Behavioural Insights Teams (BIT) and to look at two potential interventions – and then to decide on which one to pilot. BIT had already highlighted the importance of being able to measure the impact of any proposed intervention. It was also noted that it was important to identify both what was abnormal and also what to do as a result.

9. Equine Medicines. Nothing to report
10. Update from related groups/initiatives
  - a. Animal Health and Welfare Board for England. RO referred to the latest (22 Oct) AHWBE newsletter that referred to the development of an Equine Health and Welfare Pathway as part of the development of wider Animal Health and Welfare Pathways. Little was known about this and questions would be raised at the 13 Dec meeting of the British Horse Council.
  - b. British Horse Council. RO reported that key issues currently were about effective funding for enforcing equine health and welfare legislation and the implementation of an effective equine identification system.
  - c. Equine Stakeholder Group for Scotland. Date of next meeting to be confirmed.
  - d. DARD strategy development. SC reported that the Deloitte analysis of the NI equine industry was published in June. The report estimates an equine population of 34,000. Based on the analysis the industry is estimated to be worth £212m per annum with associated employment of up to 3300 FTE's. The analysis also suggests 6 thematic areas for further consideration. It is proposed that as a first step a cross government equine strategy steering group is established to consider the findings and recommendations.
  - e. AHT Equine Industry Committee. The last meeting was on 4 Sep and RN noted the presentation on AMR resistance and highlighted the Horse Trust funded project on antibiotic prescribing in equine practice through Liverpool University – including lessons learned from the SAVSNET initiative in small animal practice.
11. AOB
  - a. Equine movement recording. APa highlighted the challenges involved in tracing movements following this year's EVA cases – on average it had taken 20 staff hours per tracing. It was agreed that event organisers were key in this process. APa had drafted up a template for key details to be recorded for equines at events – which he would circulate for feedback. It was agreed that the Digital Stable has significant potential here.
  - b. Farm Animal Welfare Committee. LK noted that the remit of the Council had been expanded to include companion animals (including equines) and wild animals – and had been renamed: the Animal Welfare Committee.
12. Date of next meeting – Wed 13 May – BHA, High Holborn, London.