

**Notes of the 'UK Equine Disease Coalition' meeting  
Wednesday 24 Nov 2021  
Via Zoom online platform**

Attendance

Mike Anderson (MA) (Scottish Gov)	Ben Mayes BM (clinical practice)
Chris Bain (CB) (Scottish Gov)	Keith Meldrum KM (Observer)
Mark Bowen MB (clinical practice)	David Mountford DM (BEVA)
Shane Collins SC (DAERA)	Richard Newton RN (Cambridge University)
Linda Evans LE (The Donkey Sanctuary)	Roly Owers RO (World Horse Welfare) – Chair
Alastair George AG (APHA)	Gosia Siwonia GS (Welsh Gov)
Sara Higgins (SH) (APHA)	Sally Taylor (ST) (BHA)
Liz Kelly LK (World Horse Welfare)	
Roxane Kirton RK (RSPCA)	Guest
Joe Latimer JL (Defra)	Jane Nixon (JN) (British Horse Foundation)

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1. RO welcomed everyone to the meeting noting the attendance of Chris Bain as a new representative from Scottish Government and Jane Nixon from the British Horse Foundation as a guest. Apologies were received from Martyn Blissitt (Scottish Government) and Helen Roberts (Defra).
2. Notes on the previous meeting – Wed 12 May 2021 – were agreed as an accurate record.
3. Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda
  - a. Equine Movements Template. AG confirmed that this continues to be delayed by other work pressures and is still work in progress.
  - b. Equine Infectious Disease Surveillance Oversight Committee. DM explained that the Committee, funded to date by the HBLB, is in place to promote the initial oversight and development of RN's team, now based at Cambridge University. One meeting of the Committee has been held, with DM and James Hick (BHS) in attendance representing the future non-racing funders. RN noted that his team had been welcomed by James Wood at Cambridge.
4. Terms of Reference (ToR). Last amended in November 2019. Currently the ToR describes the formal role of GB Equine Exotic Disease Core Group as one of the EDCs functions. JL explained that work was in progress to finalise the membership of the official Core Group as described in the recently published Contingency Plan for Exotic Notifiable Diseases of Animals. He confirmed this will include individual members of the Coalition and/or representatives from the Coalition. The Coalition's Terms of Reference were approved unchanged for the present and will be amended when membership of the Core Group is confirmed.
5. Disease update
  - a. Equine Influenza. RN was pleased to report that the move to Cambridge had led to the reinstatement of the sentinel practice scheme. This means that free testing for EI (funded by HBLB) can be offered, for example where there were financial restrictions on owners or mild cases had been seen in vaccinated animals. In terms of confirmed disease, so far in 2021 there had been 19 outbreaks, spread across the UK. 11 had been typed, with all being Florida clade 1. The majority of cases were in non-vaccinated horses imported from the EU. This clade is evolving, but no major changes.

EI is still being seen globally, with low numbers reported from France, Germany, the Netherlands and Tunisia. There were 18 reports from the US, however these are not official and there may be more. RN confirmed that there were no changes in the OIE vaccine recommendations, there were no significant change in strains and not enough cases seen in vaccinated animals to determine differences in the efficacy of the available vaccines.

ST explained the recent changes to vaccine protocols put in place by BHA and detailed on the BHA website. In summary, from 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2022, all horses must comply with the new intervals (2<sup>nd</sup> dose 21-60 days, 3<sup>rd</sup> dose 120-180 days). These intervals comply with the manufacturers' recommendations and are the same as used in France and Germany. In addition, from 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2022, booster vaccinations must be not more than 6 months apart. There is a lead-in period for the 6 month boosters with entries not refused until 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2023 to give time to comply. DM reported that BEF was looking at vaccine requirements and hopes to align with racing. However this continued to be discussed.

- b. Equine Viral Arteritis. JL explained that the work on the review of the 1995 EVA Order had been subsumed into the strategic work on the existing pieces of equine disease control legislation. He discussed the draft proposal sent to EDC. The work is being carried out in close collaboration with WG and SG, with DAERA involved and working within Animal Health Law implications.

The proposal is to revoke the current equine disease legislation (IHDO, EVA Order, Specified Diseases (Notification and Slaughter) Order and AHS), noting the complications as these are a mixture of GB and individual administrations legislation. The new overarching legislation will categorise diseases (A,B,C) with control measures covering all diseases in that category and individual diseases named in annexes, with a clear set of instructions for each disease. This provides a flexible system for inclusion of new and emerging diseases, where classification and control measures can be applied quickly. Further details can be seen in the proposal (attached).

JL discussed the importance of collaborative working with the DAs as separate pieces of legislation will first need to be revoked and then the overarching legislation brought in for each administration. EDC were asked for comments on the draft proposal and a public consultation was being prepared. GS confirmed this was the case with WG and their intention to adopt this new approach but highlighted the problem on availability of government legal advice which will impact the timeline. CB confirmed the same approach in Scotland. SC confirmed that DAERA was involved but mindful of the different situation in NI reference the AHL.

Other comments were on potentially splitting the encephalitides by human disease risk (e.g. WNV where industry could be more involved) and questions on the timeline (difficult to ascertain). AG raised the point that the categorisation and controls give more responsibility to industry and whether there were concerns about capacity. RN believed this would not be a major issue. JL said that the government would maintain reserved powers in case of issues arising. Overall the general approach was seen as more flexible and EDC will look at in detail and respond to the formal consultations.

- c. Equine Herpes. RN reported that the UK had had 2 neurological cases in April and May, not linked to the large Spain/Portugal outbreak. One EHV abortion had just been confirmed and

there may be more after Christmas. Discussions continue within racing on mandatory vaccination for EHV1 (as currently the case in France and Germany).

- d. African Horse Sickness. Linked to previous discussion on proposed changes in legislation. JL said that the recently published EFSA opinion would play a role in the legislation and control strategy for AHS as some flexibility in, for example, the zone sizes depending of time of year, had been recommended.
- e. West Nile Virus. The concerns raised previously on the clarity of the guidance on the exclusion testing regime for WNV were reiterated by KM. **AG will review**, with KM to forward all previous correspondence. RN agreed that there is a challenge in having suspect cases tested without raising alarm bells and that it would be an improvement if industry took responsibility for surveillance testing. DM informed the group that BEVA had hosted a podcast by RN which included information on vaccination.

RO introduced JN, chair of the British Horse Foundation. The Foundation works with the general equestrian public to promote responsible breeding. She reported the lack of knowledge of WNV within the sector and discussed the podcast referred to by DM above. She is keen to promote the education of the equine public on WNV and is working with World Horse Welfare to do this. She acknowledged the helpful information already published by the BHS.

- f. CEM. RN reported on the outbreak in Devon in a stallion imported from Poland, with 3 mares already covered before testing. The owner has been very open to following the HBLB Code of Practice. The alert was due to the brother of the stallion testing positive in an AI station in the Netherlands. 2 tested mares were positive, one of which is pregnant. This mare (and her foal) will be tested again. The stallion has been treated and is now negative and the first 3 mares he goes on to cover will also be tested. There has been good compliance with this case.
  - g. Strangles. Andy Waller (ex-AHT) is in discussion with OIE to consider strangles as a listed disease. A new sub-unit vaccine has been developed and will be ready for early next year.
6. Regulatory update
- a. Equine ID and CED. LK reported that the Equine ID team in Defra were preparing a consultation on improvements to the equine ID legislation in England. DM confirmed that the consultation was imminent. GS will ask for any update from her colleagues in Cardiff. CB said that SG had seen the draft Defra consultation and were doing some preliminary work. They had seen and agreed with the briefing paper submitted to the three administrations by World Horse Welfare. DAERA is amending their legislation in line with the AHL and a draft is now with their Minister. Compulsory registration for equine premises is also being progressed.
  - b. Animal Health Law (AHL). Nothing to add.
  - c. Traceability Design User Group (TDUG). Nothing additional to report.
  - d. Proposed Licensing of Sanctuaries and Rehoming Centres in England, Scotland & Wales. LK said that World Horse Welfare continued to work with SG on the Local Authority guidance for the new Scottish legislation.

- e. Welfare in Transport. LK said that there had not yet been any notification of the species specific workshops to be put in place by Defra to discuss the detail of proposed changes to the Welfare in Transport legislation. These had originally been planned to take place in Autumn 2021 but other work pressures had delayed them.
- 7. EU-GB/NI trade. RO raised the recent correspondence received from James Crabtree (BEVA) on the challenges in sending samples (blood/serum and semen) for diagnostic screening in the Netherlands and Germany. A particular difficulty lay in identifying the commodity codes needed for semen samples. AG said that while it was seen as preferable that testing was done in the UK, he would explore the issue with the trade team in Defra. SC reported that many difficulties continued with trade and there was no short-term solution. The regular birdtables helped to raise issues. New EU AHL Export Health Certificates will be in place from 15<sup>th</sup> January and these will apply to equine movements from GB to Northern Ireland.

It was noted that Jim Eyre of British Equestrian had raised the impacts on the non-racing equestrian sector, including the relocation of riders to the continent, with several Government departments.

- 8. Biosecurity Behaviour Change Project. LK reported that the project remains on hold but the intention is still to progress this at the appropriate time.
- 9. Equine Medicines. DM reported a short term supply issue with 50ml bottles of Somulose. LK mentioned the successful lobbying carried out across the veterinary sector to ensure that critically important antibiotics remained an option for use in animals, in light of the proposed ban going through the European Parliament.
- 10. Update from related groups/initiatives.
  - a. Animal Health and Welfare Board for England. Jonathan Statham is the new chair. Tim Morris has now left the Board and there is no specific equine expert although a number of other members are well known to the sector.
  - b. British Horse Council. DM reported that the main focus has been on Equine ID and the work on the new SI. He also mentioned the work presented to EFRACom on equine ID and movements.
  - c. Equine Health and Welfare Pathway. DM reported some aspects remain to be refined before consultation in the New Year. A stakeholder meeting will be held in December. The Pathway emphasises vaccination, surveillance and ID (animal, premises and movement). There has been good engagement with the Defra team.
  - d. Equine Stakeholder Group for Scotland. The Group is active and is next due to meet on 21<sup>st</sup> February. RO also noted that there had been good engagement with the Cabinet Secretary.
  - e. Animal Welfare Network Wales (AWNW – Equine Working Group). RO reported that this new sub-group is chaired by Carolyn Madgwick (Horse Trust) with secretarial support from Kim Ayling (World Horse Welfare).
  - f. DAERA strategy development. SC reported that the cross governmental steering group is now operational and will be publishing a consultation by May 2022. Current work includes progressing farrier registration, equine tourism and equine therapy courses.

- g. Equine Industry Committee. RN that the Committee continues to meet with Sidney Ricketts as chair, last meeting 8<sup>th</sup> September, next meeting 16<sup>th</sup> February. The group has a broad remit and has been helpful, for example, in vaccine supply issues. The international element of the meetings remains.

11. AOB. None

12. Date of next meeting – 9.30am on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2022 – format to be decided.