

**Notes of the 'UK Equine Disease Coalition' meeting
Wednesday 11 May 2022
Via Zoom online platform**

Mike Anderson (MA) (Scottish Gov)	Keith Meldrum KM (Observer)
Mark Bowen MB (clinical practice)	Richard Newton RN (Cambridge University)
Linda Evans LE (The Donkey Sanctuary)	Jane Nixon (JN) (British Horse Foundation)
William Gavin-King (WGK) (Scottish Gov)	Roly Owers RO (World Horse Welfare) – Chair
Anastasia Georgaki (DAERA)	Amanda Piggot (AP) (BHA)
Annabel Henderson (AH) (Scottish Gov)	Tharindu Premachandra (TP) (Defra)
Sara Higgins (SH) (APHA)	Helen Roberts (HR) (Defra)
Liz Kelly LK (World Horse Welfare)	Gosia Siwonia GS (Welsh Gov)
Joe Latimer JL (Defra)	Charlotte Smith (CS) (DAERA)
Ben Mayes BM (clinical practice)	

1. RO welcomed everyone to the meeting noting the attendance of new attendees and the breadth of the meeting's attendance with all four countries represented. Apologies were received from Scott McDowell and Chris Bain (Scottish Government) and David Mountford (BEVA).
2. Notes on the previous meeting – Wed 24 November 2021 – were agreed as an accurate record.
3. Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda
 - a. Equine Movements Template. SH said that the APHA epidemiology field team continued to be busy with avian influenza and the template continued to be delayed. However a new person had joined the team and this work is a priority.
4. Terms of Reference (ToR). Last amended in November 2019. RN noted that Section 1c in the Annex referred to the now dissolved Tripartite Agreement. **Action RO**
5. Disease update
 - a. Review of equine disease control legislation. JL confirmed that the proposal remained the same as presented to EDC previously and the draft legislation and consultation was being prepared by the Defra team and would be published shortly. There would be a full 12 week consultation. GS reported that the Welsh Government may be unable to achieve the same pace of delivery as access to their legal team was difficult due to backlogs. For the Scottish Government, AH hoped that they would be in a position to do a joint consultation with Defra (Chris Bain is leading this work). AG confirmed that in NI the work continues on the EU Animal Health Law, reflecting the different position there.
 - b. Equine Influenza. In terms of confirmed disease, RN reminded the group that in 2021 there had been 30 confirmed outbreaks, 16 in the last two months of the year. To date this year there has been one, in Surrey. The majority of cases (80%) continue to be in non-vaccinated horses recently imported from the EU, including Ireland. The 6 monthly recommendations for vaccines remain.

An outbreak of EI, with secondary bacterial infection had caused 140 deaths in mustangs in Colorado. This demonstrated the potential effect of the disease in stressed, unvaccinated animals.

AP confirmed that the vaccine protocols for racing remained as explained last November and detailed on the BHA website. *[In summary, from 1st Jan 2022, all horses must comply with the new intervals (2nd dose 21-60 days, 3rd dose 120-180 days). These intervals comply with the manufacturers' recommendations and are the same as used in France and Germany. In addition, from 1st 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 1st Jan 2023 to give time to comply].* However, there is a slight difference with Ireland affecting some 25 horses that will be unable to race in Ireland although eligible in GB due to differences in the lead-in period.

- c. Equine Herpes. RN reported that the disease continues to be reported widely across Europe with 1-2 cases per country. In the US, 28 cases have been confirmed, 11 in California linked to competitive events. The FEI are very concerned about this, and mandatory vaccination had been discussed at the recent FEI Sports Forum. RO did not foresee imminent changes in the FEI vaccine requirements but reported that some national Federations (e.g. Spain and France) did already or would be mandating vaccination. RN's view is that currently the FEI have insufficient evidence to mandate.
- d. Equine infectious anaemia. HR confirmed that the UK continues to carry out post import checks on all animals imported from Romania (at their UK destination) and the [recent easing of movements for equines from Romania](#) within the EU has no effect.

There is much concern regarding the delay in border checks and Defra continue to raise this issue within Government. On a question from RN on the issue of the EU being a 'third country' for the UK, HR said that while testing for all imported EU equines would not be done (with exception of Romania and Italy), risk-based targeting will continue in line with WTO rules.

- e. African Horse Sickness. HR informed the group that the EU will conduct an assurance visit to South Africa in October and this may have implications for the UK if the EU does agree to open up. The UK may conduct its own assurance visit. RN reported hearing of direct exports from Johannesburg to the US, followed by quarantine, but worrying as it was during the vector season.

LE referred to the SE Asia outbreak which had now calmed down but mentioned the difficulty in navigating the OIE reporting system. HR said the recent 'outbreak' described in Malaysia was most likely to be vaccine strains in imported animals. In Thailand issues were with the difficulties in testing zebras.

- f. West Nile Virus. The concerns raised previously on the clarity of the guidance on the exclusion testing regime for WNV were reiterated by KM as he felt there was an issue between the advice in the Vet Record and the Gov website. RN felt that the current system does tend to deter vets as it is complex and confusing and therefore this may reduce surveillance. It must be made easier for vets to access testing, particularly as the horse is not an infectious threat. HR said that any changes to the testing regime must go to ADPG as the current instructions are correct on current procedures. **Action – Defra to produce paper to present to ADPG to simplify the procedure for vets in the field.**

There was discussion on more work needed to raise awareness in practitioners, to add to that already done by BEVA and others. HR described the information on YouTube for other diseases, notified to relevant stakeholders, and saw that as a potential way for dissemination

of information equine diseases. **Action – David Mountford to explore this on behalf of BEVA**

In response to a question from CS, HR confirmed that APHA continue to test for WNV (and Usutu) in mass bird die offs and mosquito testing is also done.

- g. CEM. RN reported that the outbreak in Devon is not yet closed as the mare had now foaled and her colt would be tested. The stallion was now clear on retest. There had been a further (unrelated) confirmed case in February 2022 in an imported sports horse stallion, through semen collection with routine testing. This stallion had been treated, was now negative and resolved. All cases were dealt with using the industry protocol and all had been imports from mainland Europe. RN raised the question of whether all imported entire breeding animals should be routinely screened.
6. Regulatory update
- a. Border Control Posts. All agreed that the pressure had to be kept on wider government that the delay in import inspections to Dec 2023 had potentially serious biosecurity consequences. On the post at Sevington, HR said that discussions continued on the percentage of equines to be fully checked (in addition to a document check) and on the definition of 'low risk'. Currently the 'high health' status was used. GS informed the group that work was in train to prepare BCPs in Wales but the end date was not known as this work was starting from scratch.
 - b. Equine ID and CED. LK reported that the Equine ID team in Defra had published their consultation on changes to the equine ID legislation in England. There is a move towards digitilisation of the system although in certain circumstances (e.g. travelling to Europe), a paper document would be necessary. The British Horse Council has [published a short survey](#) to help inform sector response to the consultation on any changes. KM said that private vets should be encouraged to respond to the consultation and RO confirmed that the survey will be in place until the end of May and has been publicised to horse owners and vets through BEVA, BHS, the Horse Trust and World Horse Welfare. It is envisaged that there may be separate responses from the sector if there are differences in opinion to some matters (e.g. signing back into the food chain). MB commented on the time taken to get to this point and the frustration with the inaccuracy of the CED data, particularly in regard to imported horses from Ireland where passports were not being updated.

MA reported on recent visits to racing stables in Scotland to look at practical issues and following the outcome of the Defra consultation would set up further meetings. Their intention was to have a single PIO (ScotEquine) for ID with a separate zootech certificate. It was recognised that paper passports would still be needed for exports.
 - c. Animal Health Law (AHL). There were challenges across different Member States but nothing further to add.
 - d. Traceability Design User Group (TDUG). Nothing additional to report.
 - e. Proposed Licensing of Sanctuaries and Rehoming Centres in England, Scotland & Wales. LK said that World Horse Welfare continued to work with the Scottish Gov on the Local Authority guidance for the new Scottish legislation. Defra intended to publish a consultation on this shortly.

- f. Welfare in Transport. LK said that the expected workshops to discuss and refine the proposed changes had been delayed and the first equine workshop was now expected to be held in June, on journey times. The other workshops will focus on temperature and space allowances. LK's understanding is that all administrations will be involved in these workshops.
 - g. Kept Animals Bill. This has been carried forward to the next session in the Queen's Speech.
7. EU-GB/NI trade. BM raised the huge administrative burden of the paperwork involved, for example a 12-page document for horses going to NI from GB. A digital system is needed. The system must be made more practical as there is a continuing shortage of veterinary resources. AG said that in NI electronic systems have been developed but OVs must still complete and sign the Animal Health Certificates. It was accepted that there are real difficulties with no short term solution yet found. RO raised the previously reported issue of difficulties with lab samples for screening in the Netherlands and Germany but SH said she was not aware of continuing problems.
 8. Biosecurity Behaviour Change Project. LK reminded the group of the work done to date by the collaborating welfare organisations on this project including a survey by horse owners, visits to livery yards and discussions with the Behavioural Insights Team on potential interventions. The project continues to be on hold. **Action LK to discuss next steps with the organisations involved (Redwings, BHS, Blue Cross)**. LE said that the Donkey Sanctuary would be keen to be involved as they had done much work on biosecurity.
 9. Equine Medicines. BM reported that the supply issues with Somulose continued. MB raised the Commission's [vet medicines consultation](#) on the proposed list of antimicrobials reserved for human use and was surprised at the inclusion of a number of antivirals and anticoccidials in the list. While these drugs are not regularly used, it would be a concern if the UK followed this line and would need further discussion. FVE will be responding to this consultation.

GS said that the Animal and Environment AMR Delivery Group had carried out a survey on the use of antimicrobials in companion animals and equines and it would be of interest to see the results. **Action LK to include on agenda next meeting**

10. Update from related groups/initiatives.
 - a. Animal Health and Welfare Board for England. Peter Laurie, Chief Executive Officer of Battersea Dogs and Cats Home now has responsibility for the equine portfolio and had good engagement with equine stakeholders.
 - b. British Horse Council. Equine ID and transport continue to be the main focus.
 - c. Equine Health and Welfare Pathway. No further update. LE asked that the Donkey Sanctuary is included in discussions. **Action RO to raise with David Mountford**
 - d. Equine Stakeholder Group for Scotland. The next meeting will be in August.
 - e. Animal Welfare Network Wales (AWNW – Equine Working Group). No further update.
 - f. DAERA strategy development. CS reported that the strategy is progressing – including farrier registrations, sector training initiatives. The equine ID consultation will be published later this year. Progress is being made on equine premise registration. RO noted that on equine

therapy/assisted activity a voluntary human/equine interaction register had been set up led by the Riding for the Disabled Association and this could be of use for Local Authorities.

- g. Equine Industry Committee. RN that the Committee continues to meet with Sidney Ricketts as chair, last meeting 16 February, with good European engagement. RN welcomed the fact that Defra representatives continue to attend the meetings.
- h. Equine Infectious Disease Surveillance Oversight Committee. Chaired by Anne Lambert, the Committee last met on 12 Apr.

11. AOB.

- a. The Animal Sentience and Animal Welfare Committees are recruiting for chairs and new members. [Adverts are now live](#).
- b. The Annual Review of the Contingency Plan for Exotic Animal Diseases of Animals in England has been revised. Minor revisions are marked but no significant changes have been made. RO asked about the equine core group being set up to advise Defra in the event of an outbreak. JL confirmed that invitation letters were in the process of being approved and would be sent out shortly.
- c. HR said that there had been a Japanese Encephalitis outbreak in Australia. JEE is now a Category E disease with the horse as a dead end host. Defra is looking at this.

12. Date of next meeting – 9.30am on Wed 16 Nov – same format as today.