

**Notes of the UK Equine Disease Coalition meeting
Wednesday 16th November 2022
Via Zoom online platform**

Anastasia Georgaki (AG) DAERA
Liz Kelly (LK) World Horse Welfare
Roxane Kirton (RK) RSPCA
Ben Mayes (BM) - clinical practitioner
David Mountford (DM) BEVA
Richard Newton (RN) Cambridge University

Jane Nixon (JN) British Horse Foundation
Roly Owers (RO) World Horse Welfare – Chair
Tharindu Premachandra (TP) Defra
Jon Rouse (JR) Defra
Charlotte Smith (CS) DAERA
Shona Traynor (ST) Welsh Government

1. RO welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Scottish Government colleagues, Kelly Harty (APHA) and Helen Roberts (Defra), Gosia Siwonia (Welsh Government) and Mark Bowen (clinical practitioner).
2. Notes on the previous meeting – Wed 11 May 2022 – were agreed as an accurate record.
3. Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda
 - a. Equine Movements Template. This has been carried forward due to continued pressure of work at APHA due to avian influenza. **Action KH**
4. Terms of Reference (ToR). Last amended in November 2019. RO stated that the ToR named the Equine Disease Coalition (EDC) as the acting GB Equine Exotic Disease Core Group in the face of a disease outbreak. In the light of the formation of a separate Government chaired Equine Core Group (ECG) this needed to be amended. Clarity was sought on the roles of each group. TP confirmed that the ECG was for disease control purposes only, in the event of an outbreak and in that role it would receive confidential information. It would also meet during peacetime. The EDC, as stated in the ToR, had a wider remit. RN said that it was helpful that the two groups had a number of members in common and this should continue. LK raised a question on the timing of meetings in order to avoid duplication. EDC meetings were held in May and November. It was agreed:
 - To review timings of ECG meetings in light of EDC meetings. **Action TP**
 - To update the ToR by removing reference to EDC acting as a core group and the reference to the now dissolved Tripartite Agreement in Section 1c in the Annex plus inserting some information on the membership of the EDC. **Action RO**
5. Disease update
 - a. Equine influenza. RN reported an upturn in EI diagnoses with 18 reported outbreaks since 11 May (16 since 27 Oct). These outbreaks were mainly linked to sales – Shetlands at Worcester Market (18 Oct) with spread following pony movements. 340 ponies went through this sale. There were also multiple reports linked to horses from Ireland (Goresbridge sale), some shipped via Northern Ireland. Some cases were linked to imports from the Netherlands too. All outbreaks involved unvaccinated animals. RN confirmed that he had not received reports of cases of EI from Ireland. CS attended the inaugural meeting of the Irish Veterinary Equine Association on 12 Nov in Kilkenny and heard Ann Cullinane (Irish Equine Centre) present who said that of 1,100 samples taken for EI, 5 had been positive with no increase in respiratory disease seen. Ann felt that the outbreaks seen in the UK were possibly a result of stressed young animals picking up infection at their destination. RN had received information that horses were unloaded at their destination with respiratory signs

and at fully vaccinated premises. It was agreed to explore further how EI vaccination could be promoted at the Goresbridge and similar sales. **Action CS**

In discussion it was clear that in general markets may not insist on vaccination for all animals. For example, JN confirmed that at the forthcoming British Breeding sales in late November, youngstock were not required to be vaccinated but yearlings and 2/3 year olds were. At markets this may reflect neither the current owner nor the new owner taking responsibility. BM said that there were cultural and behavioural attitudes too. Some success had been seen at Appleby in 2019 following Redwings work in liaising with owners and taking samples from diseased horses. It was a challenge. RN drew attention to recently published work in the EVJ.

- b. Equine Herpes Virus. RN said there had not been much disease seen this year – EHV1 in a racing yard (neurological) in June. Testing went well. Some animals were lost.
- c. Equine Infectious Anaemia. RN referred to the status of GB as a third country and questioned the requirements for imports. This applies to other diseases too.
- d. African Horse Sickness. There was no update on the recent EU assurance visit to South Africa. EU had not yet released their report to South Africa.
- e. West Nile Virus. There was no update on the review of testing guidance. RN gave information on the confirmation of WNV in a neurological case in Hertfordshire and reminded the group that the horse is a dead end host. He quoted the experienced equine clinician involved in the case describing it ‘as the single most frustrating experience in several years, that left her considering whether she would ever test for WNV again’ as movement restrictions were discussed on the equine hospital. Given the ongoing frustrations with the current system it was agreed to look to set up a meeting between APHA, Defra and EDC. **Action RO** (post-meeting note: *HR confirmed that movement restrictions were not necessary across the whole hospital and that further discussion was needed to get to the bottom of the issues*)

In discussion the group felt that while much information was available to practitioners on WNV more work was needed to inform them on the decision making process. Suggestions put forward to improve this were – more use of social media to increase awareness of the risk, publication of confirmed cases and information on vector spread for owners moving their horses into those areas. DM provided links to information already available (see Annex 1).

- f. CEM. RN reported that the Devon case was now closed, all negative. A separate case had occurred in an imported (NL) warmblood stallion. The treatment was not effective and culture was positive. The owner had now exported the horse back to the Netherlands and there is a risk that it may be re-imported at some point. TP confirmed that Defra were aware of this possibility.
- g. Other. RN raised the Japanese Encephalitis outbreak in Australia, still in progress. He also mentioned the concern of the TB industry on the Kentucky cases of foal diarrhoea caused by rotavirus B (not covered by the vaccine). A test for rotavirus B will be included in the diagnostic panel for foal diarrhoea and it will be monitored in the New Year.

6. Regulatory update
 - a. Review of equine disease control legislation. JR said that the draft SI on consolidation of the equine diseases legislation would be out for consultation in March, pushed back due to resource issues.
 - b. Exotic Equine Disease Compensation legislation – consultation. JR said that the responses to the consultation were now being considered and it was expected that the legislation would be in place by early spring.
 - c. Animal Health Regulation. Nothing to report. Item will now be removed from agenda.
 - d. Border Control Posts. DM said that exports were still causing problems. On imports it was hoped that a system for equines would have high priority in the target operating model work and that the Government was open to the different risks associated with high health animals.
 - e. Equine ID and CED. DM said that the response report from Defra on the consultation had now been approved by the Minister with publication imminent.

ST updated the meeting subsequently that it is a long term future policy ambition in Welsh Government to introduce equines on to the multispecies EID Cymru system, similar to the approach taken by Scottish Government with ScotEquine.
 - f. Traceability Design User Group (TDUG). Nothing additional to report.
 - g. Proposed Licensing of Sanctuaries and Rehoming Centres in England, Scotland & Wales. TP said that Defra plans for future licensing were to be confirmed. ST updated the meeting that Welsh Government is working to establish options and timelines to regulate animal welfare establishments (AWEs) and animal exhibits (AEs) and will build on previous work to continue to work with Defra and Scottish colleagues to ensure a consistent approach where appropriate. Officials are working with the project leads of the Welsh Government-funded Local Authority Enforcement project to develop a process for extending and strengthening the established model for the training of enforcement officers as new licensing regulations are introduced.
 - h. Welfare in Transport. LK said that the first workshop to discuss and refine the proposed changes had taken place on journey times, with no date as yet for the next workshop on temperature. A ban on the export of live cattle, sheep, pigs, goats and equines, including for fattening for slaughter, is included in the Kept Animals Bill (see below).
 - i. Kept Animals Bill. This has been delayed, possibly due to resource issues in government. BVA have launched a [campaign](#) to highlight the importance of the Bill and encourage its further progress through the legislative system. ST updated subsequent to the meeting that Legislative Consent Memorandums, in respect of all the clauses contained in the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill have been laid in the Senedd, including prohibiting live export, provisions to address dogs attacking/worrying livestock, pet imports, keeping primates as pets and zoo standards.
7. EU-GB/Ni trade. RO reported discussions with Joe Collins on vet medicines supply issues in NI. These were explained subsequently by CS concerning the NI protocol as GB is now classed as a third country 'all medicines imported from a Third Country must be batch tested before release.

So medicines arriving direct from EU/ROI are fine, or any that are transiting through GB from EU. However, any which are manufactured or warehoused in GB would require testing on arrival in NI. This is obviously extremely problematic. Until 31 Dec there is a Grace Period. After that further options are to be explored. More information can be found [here](#). DM confirmed that BEVA were involved in discussions on this with NI colleagues.

8. Biosecurity Behaviour Change Project. LK had spoken to two of the collaborating welfare organisations, both of whom were keen to progress the project – but not yet due to other priorities. The project remains on hold.

JN reported on work being done by BHF with a meeting to discuss biosecurity in late Nov/early Dec and a document produced by the equine disease advisory group on advice for venues, again on biosecurity.

9. Equine Medicines.

- a. Supply issues. RN said that the issue with equine flu vaccine had been a batch release problem, not a production one. BEVA had worked on a strategy to help practitioners with prioritisation, with assistance from VMD on imported vaccine from the US. Protec was now back in supply. This highlighted the problem of having just two main suppliers of these vaccines and in future practices may need to have contracts with more than one supplier.
- b. Presentation on survey carried by Animal and Environment AMR Delivery Group. Moved to next meeting. **Action GS**

10. Update from related groups/initiatives.

- a. Animal Health and Welfare Board for England. Peter Laurie continues to be supportive and engaged with the sector.
- b. British Horse Council. DM reported that work on ID, vaccinations, imports and exports and AMR continues. A new group (CANTER – Controlling ANThelmintic resistance in Equines Responsibly) has been formed, currently led by the VMD, to address the issue of anthelmintic resistance in equines.
- c. Equine Health and Welfare Pathway. DM said that including equines in the pathway had now been approved by the AHWBE and an assessment of the economic impact of the changes proposed were being considered before making a recommendation to the Minister.
- d. Equine Stakeholder Group for Scotland. RO confirmed he continues to attend the meetings.
- e. Animal Welfare Network Wales (AWNW – Equine Working Group). No further update.
- f. DAERA strategy development. CS reported that the strategy is progressing, with joint equine forum meetings with industry. Off road riding is being promoted. Farrier registration needs primary legislation and will be delayed until mid 2024. Progress is being made on equine premise registration which is on the pathway to compliance.
- g. Equine Industry Committee. RN reported that the Committee met on 21 Sep, next meeting 8 Feb. This is an international group which includes confidential discussions on products. The zoom format of meetings will continue and works well.
- h. Equine Infectious Disease Surveillance Oversight Committee. This is chaired by HBLB and oversees the work carried out by RN's team at Cambridge. It reviews industry funded

surveillance in UK and provides an industry view on how funding can be best used to protect their sectors. A sub-committee will report in the New Year, industry will explore the options. RN said that Defra also supported surveillance by funding of the Quarterly Surveillance Reports.

11. AOB. None

12. Date of next virtual meeting – 9.30am on Wed 10 May 23.

Annex 1: West Nile Virus resources (provided by DM)

BEVA' WNV (and linked) resources

- Iowa State University: [WNV Fast Facts for clients](#) and [Further Information](#)
- [DEFRA Guidance: West Nile fever: how to spot and report the disease](#)
- APHA: [Testing for exclusion of West Nile virus in horses](#)
- BEVA Clinical Catch Up: [WNV - Should we be worried? \(Orsolya Kutsasi\)](#)
- BEVApod (Episode 21): [West Nile Virus with Richard Newton](#)
- [TheHorse.com video/webinar](#)

BEVA's WNV Comms

- News item: [November 2022 case in Hertfordshire \(Spain\)](#)
- News item: [September 2020 case in the Netherlands](#)

Collaborative production of the [Equine Quarterly Disease Surveillance Reports](#)

- [2020 Q1](#) Focus. West Nile fever in Europe in 2018: an emerging problem or just an anomaly?
- [2013 Q3](#) News West Nile Virus in South Europe
- [2011 Q3](#) News West Nile Virus situation in Europe
- [2009 Q2](#) Focus. West Nile Virus
- [2005 Q4](#) Focus. West Nile Virus in horses

EVJ publications

- [Spatial distribution and infection of West Nile virus lineages 1 and 2 in France from 2015 to 2020 \(Beck et al, 2021\)](#)
- Free Access ABSTRACT: [The sensitivity of horse surveillance in detecting West Nile and Usutu viruses in central Italy](#) - Volume 53, Issue S56; First published: 24 September 2021; Collections: Abstracts of the 11th International Equine Infectious Diseases Conference, 27th September – 1st October 2021
- Free Access ABSTRACT: [Seroprevalence of equine infectious anaemia virus \(EIAV\), equine arteritis virus \(EAV\) and West Nile virus \(WNV\) in donkeys in eastern Algeria in 2015](#); Equine Veterinary Journal Volume 53, Issue S56; First published: 24 September 2021; Collections: Abstracts of the 11th International Equine Infectious Diseases Conference, 27th September – 1st October 2021
- Free Access ABSTRACT: [Identification of antiviral molecules against West-Nile virus by an approach combining cell imaging and equine neural cells derived from induced-pluripotent stem cells](#); Equine Veterinary Journal Volume 53, Issue S56; First published: 24 September 2021; Collections: Abstracts of the 11th International Equine Infectious Diseases Conference, 27th September – 1st October 2021