

**Notes of the UK Equine Disease Coalition meeting
Wednesday 10th May 2023
Via Zoom online platform**

Anastasia Georgaki (AG) DAERA	Keith Meldrum (KM) observer
Roxane Kirton (RK) RSPCA	Kelly Harty (KH) APHA
Ben Mayes (BM) clinical practitioner	Mike Anderson (MA) Scottish Government
Chris Bain (CB) Scottish Government	Richard Newton (RN) Cambridge University
David Mountford (DM) BEVA	Jane Nixon (JN) British Horse Foundation
Estevao Simoes (ES) Scottish Government	Roly Owers (RO) World Horse Welfare – Chair
Gosia Siwonia (GS) Welsh Government	Jon Rouse (JR) Defra
Helen Roberts (HR) Defra	Charlotte Smith (CS) DAERA

1. RO welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Liz Kelly (World Horse Welfare) and Sally Taylor (British Horseracing Authority).
2. Notes on the previous meeting – Wed 16 Nov 2022 – were agreed as an accurate record.
3. Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda
 - a. Equine Movements Template (carried forward since 2019). KH has been in contact with Andy Paterson – this initiative remains work in progress. **Action KH**
4. Terms of Reference (ToR). RO outlined the proposed changes to the group’s Terms of Reference as circulated based on discussion at the May meeting. Subject to some minor changes proposed by KM, the updated Terms of Reference were approved. JR/HR noted that the Equine Core Group has a role to develop policy as well providing advice during a disease outbreak. The current thinking is that the group will meet at least annually and far more regularly during an outbreak.
5. Disease update – see attached from RN.
 - a. Equine influenza. 15 outbreaks in the UK since the last meeting – with only 4 this year – no obvious point source to these cases. More activity in Europe – especially in France and Belgium.
 - b. Equine Herpes Virus. See attachment.
 - c. African Horse Sickness. HR noted that the draft report from the previous EU assurance visit to South Africa is now with South Africa. HR also noted that the UK is looking to carry out an assurance visit to South Africa in late 2023.
 - d. West Nile Virus. KH reported that work is ongoing with updating the Ops Manual with regards to the TTE protocols – and that training is ongoing for vets taking the phone reports. The aim is for this to streamline the overall process and once complete an update will be provided to the Vet Record and Quarterly Disease reporting update to highlight these changes to the veterinary profession. HR said that opening up testing to other labs is proving to be problematic – given that WNV is a notifiable disease this required the reporting lab to be 17025 accredited – and this was a significant undertaking for what could be very few samples to be tested. Despite the regulation not making this process easy, this will continue to be explored.

RN highlighted how it would greatly help if the process could be further simplified where TTE samples could be sent in without the need for a phone call with an OV. HR said that it might be possible to undertake a pilot in one region to test this approach. **Action HR**

In a discussion around how we might improve equine neurological disease/syndrome surveillance, HR noted the work of the National Biosurveillance Network. The aim of this network is to manage zoonotic threats – currently this is focusing on respiratory disease – but there might be a future possibility of undertaking a future pilot on neurological disease.

- e. CEM. See attachment. No reports of the Dutch warmblood stallion that had tested positive and returned to the Netherlands, trying to be re-imported to the UK. RN reported on the shortage in Artervac vaccine produced by Zoetis, which is likely to last until at least September 2023. A protocol had been agreed between the APHA, Defra and the TBA to confirm disease free status in animals that missed their 6-monthly booster.
6. Regulatory update
- a. Review of equine disease control legislation. JR noted that Exotic Equine Disease Compensation regulation had been laid before Parliament on 1 Mar. However, the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments raised concerns relating to the identification of the necessary powers from the Animal Health Act. As a result, the legislation is having to be re-laid – hopefully in mid-June. This has meant that work on the consolidation of the equine diseases legislation has been delayed – and a consultation is now likely to take place later this year.
 - b. Target Operating Model. Current plans would introduce import checks from mid-2024. Initial consultation open until 19 May. Concept of high health/low risk equine imports does seem to have been accepted by government but detail on how this would be approached is still to be defined.
 - c. Equine ID and CED. Since November the equine sector (through the British Horse Council) have undertaken a survey on equine ID and Defra have completed a consultation on new equine ID regulations. Government has accepted the need for a digital first system – although further detail on how this approach would be implemented is awaited.
 - d. Welfare in Transport. DM reported that there had been real concerns from the sector about some of the proposed regulatory changes – especially around temperatures and space allowances for head height. At the National Equine Forum, Lord Benyon provided a reassuring message to the sector on any proposed changes. Further detail is awaited. HR noted that EFSA had published a scientific opinion on the welfare of equidae during transport in June 2022 (attached).
 - e. Kept Animals Bill. The Bill has failed to make any further progress and the outlook for its future progression looks very doubtful.
7. EU-GB/NI trade. Grace period on testing requirements for veterinary medicines arriving in NI direct from GB has been extended until end of 2025. Following the agreement of the Windsor Framework, it remains an issue to find a longer-term solution from 2026.

8. Equine Medicines.
 - a. Supply issues. Artervac vaccine supply issues (see 5e above). Supply issues with EI vaccines seems to have resolved. Discussions are ongoing between the sector and government on how best to manage future supply disruptions– which seem inevitable.
 - b. Presentation on survey carried by Animal and Environment AMR Delivery Group. GS had to leave the meeting before this item was raised so will be carried forward. **Action GS**
9. AOB. None
10. Date of next virtual meeting – 9.30am on Wed 15 Nov.