

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 9 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON EQUINE

SUBJECT MATTER: Request for Government Accountability Office Review

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

International movement of equids and equine products has grown at an unprecedented rate in the past 10 years. The equine industry relies on safe, efficient international travel of equids for sustainability and expansion of the industry. Stakeholders recognize the potential risks of disease incursion and spread through international travel, and the industry is assessing these risks and identifying challenges and solutions to protect the health of the United States (US) equid population. Science-based analysis of international movement requires adequate and accurate data associated with the documented movement of equids or products.

Over the last several years, several Freedom of Information Act requests for data were made to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS). As the entity responsible for facilitating international movement of equids and their products through endorsement of health certificates and issuance of permits, USDA-APHIS-VS should have the data necessary for such industry analysis.

The Government Accountability Office audits of 2011 and 2017 identified the following data related issues that have not been addressed:

- Lack of slaughter horse data collection and reporting: Owner/shipper statements for slaughter horses to document the number and type of horses crossing the border for slaughter purposes.
- Horse population data: Due to the USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) equine premises definition and NASS survey methodologies, accurate estimates of horse population in the US are not available.

Without these data, industry is unable to adequately prepare for emergency disease or natural disaster situations. Additionally, due to USDA-APHIS-VS's current data recording methodologies and staffing/resources priorities and directives, the agency is unable to provide basic import/export data such as: temporary vs permanent import numbers, reason for import, verified destinations, verified consistent unique equine identification, number of exports for slaughter, equid details for sick horses (clinical manifestation, diagnosis, disposition etc.) and import data stratified by individual entry points.

RESOLUTION:

To improve data collection for the advancement and protection of equine health and welfare, the United States Animal Health Association urges the United States (US) congressional agriculture committees to request the US Government Accountability Office to conduct a review of equine import and export data collection and reporting processes and the methodology of equine data collection by the United States Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service to capture a comprehensive sample of the equine population.