RESOLUTION NUMBER: 3 **APPROVED**

SOURCE: **COMMITTEE ON EQUINE**

SUBJECT MATTER: **Contagious Equine Metritis Import Polymerase Chain Reaction Testing for Overgrowth Conditions**

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association requests that the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services, Veterinary Services, National Center for Import and Export revise the Veterinary Guidance 13406.3 document to add a provision to permit the use of polymerase chain reaction testing for situations where bacterial culture overgrowth occurs to determine the management of the imported horse.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Contagious equine metritis (CEM) is classified as a foreign animal disease in the United States. It is a venereal disease of horses caused by the bacterium *Taylorella equigenitalis*, which can affect fertility in both mares and stallions. Upon importation to the United States from CEM-affected countries, mares and stallions are required to undergo testing for CEM.

CEM is a slow-growing organism that requires a week-long culture period. Some cultured samples exhibit non-target bacterial overgrowth on the culture plates, which prevents accurate interpretation. Re-sampling and subsequent repeat cultures often result in similar overgrowth issues.

Historically, a dilute vinegar solution was used to inhibit overgrowth, primarily caused by *Pseudomonas* species. However, a recent study conducted by the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) concluded that dilute vinegar also inhibits *T. equigenitalis* and is therefore not recommended for treating overgrowth conditions.

The current protocol involves continued re-culturing or cleaning and treating the equine, followed by a 21-day waiting period before re-sampling and culturing. These procedures significantly hinder commerce and occupy additional space in approved CEM quarantine facilities, which are already tightly scheduled in some locations.

In May 2024, NVSL confirmed a positive case of *T. equigenitalis* in Florida. Further epidemiological investigation identified 52 additional positive horses on the index farm and associated traces. Testing by culture and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) of thesehorses has substantially advanced the PCR validation process and supported the domestic response effort.