
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 7 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON EQUINE

**SUBJECT MATTER: Request for United States Department of Agriculture
Review of Equine Import/Export**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The exponential growth in international movement of the competition horse in the past 10 years has challenged the validity of the federal regulations and resulted in welfare issues as well as impeded movement of United States (U.S.) horses for international competitions. The current regulations have led to an increase in the inconsistent application of temporary waivers and subsequently to increased workload on the limited United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) staff and the equine industry. Furthermore, the advances of science, technology and diagnostic tests, have not been incorporated into the international movement regulations and policies.

The United States Animal Health Association Committee on Equine identifies a need for a comprehensive formal official review of all programs and units involved in the international movement of equine and equid products. More specifically, a review conducted by the workforce and program review team within USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services to include but not limited to a review of the following:

1. Personnel resources and the management of personnel resources to document staffing challenges, knowledge and training needs, and resource management concerns.
2. Management protocols of equids in U.S. import quarantine facilities to document concerns related to equine health and welfare.
3. Policy and procedure documents and the protocols for implementation and compliance of these across all ports, offices, and staffing locations.
4. International movement data for equids and equine products to identify trends, challenges and concerns related to temporary and permanent movements.
5. Memorandums of Understanding, derogations and waivers issued for U.S. competition and racehorses to identify areas of improved efficiency and effectiveness.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) requests United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services to conduct a

thorough and comprehensive workforce and program review of import and export services related to equids and equine products. USAHA further encourages the review team to seek assistance on the review process from subject matter experts, such as representatives from USAHA Committee on Equine, American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians/National Animal Health Laboratory Network laboratories, National Assembly of State Animal Health Officials, American Horse Council, American Association of Equine Practitioners Infectious Disease Committee, United States Equestrian Federation, Jockey Club, American Quarter Horse Association, transporters, brokers, and academia (specifically, subject matter experts on equine foreign animal diseases, equine diagnostic testing).

FINAL RESPONSE:

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) recognizes the concerns of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) and appreciates the opportunity to respond.

APHIS appreciates USAHA's feedback and concerns surrounding staffing levels for import and export activities and is supportive of the resolution pending funding availability. The Live Animal Import/ Export (LAIE) Unit underwent a Workforce Review from 2022-2023 and the review results are informing hiring decisions/priorities, onboarding approaches, training, and data management. Industry has requested to partner with APHIS to conduct a comprehensive review of APHIS' workforce, program, import and export regulations, and service related to equids and equine products. APHIS is supportive of the idea, pending availability and Departmental priorities.

APHIS looks forward to continued close collaboration with industry to address concerns related to equine imports. In early 2024, LAIE hired a second Equine Import Staff Officer; equine imports is the only live animal commodity area with two, full-time employees dedicated to a single species/ industry. APHIS will also continue our internal multi-unit equine import working groups and constantly evaluates ways to improve and streamline our work and policies. We enthusiastically support the USAHA and industry in conducting formal risk assessments and developing white papers and recommendations for APHIS' consideration.

APHIS looks forward to continuing engagement through our regularly scheduled conference calls, meetings with the Equine Industry, and via ad hoc engagement on specific topics.