NEWS REPORT

CEM in the U.S.A – reaction of the British horse industry

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In the U.S.A a total of 11 stallions and three mares have been confirmed as positive for *Taylorella equigenitalis*, the causative organism of contagious equine metritis (CEM), as of 27th February 2009. Testing was performed by the National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) and consisted of pathogen isolation on culture. On 10th December 2008 semen from a Quarter horse stallion which was being routinely tested prior to export to Europe revealed a positive result. Three other stallions standing at the same premises in Kentucky have subsequently tested positive. Another three stallions in Indiana, three in Wisconsin and one in Texas also tested positive to CEM. The positive stallions included a 13 year old Friesian stallion which was imported into the United States in late 2004 and is currently located in Wisconsin. He has been epidemiologically linked to one of the three positive stallions in Indiana which stood at the affected Kentucky stud farm in 2008. The positive mares were located in three States: one in California, one in Illinois, and one in Wisconsin. Two were bred by artificial insemination with semen from a CEM positive stallion and one was bred by natural cover to a positive stallion. None of the mares were bred by the same stallion.

Semen from the CEM-positive stallions has been widely used across the U.S. and also in Canada. As a consequence of the contact tracing 45 U.S. states and six states in Canada (Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and British Columbia) are testing for CEM. As of 27th February 2009 there were no CEM positive cases in Canada. A total of 84 exposed or positive stallions in 16 U.S. states and 530 exposed or positive mares in 44 U.S. states have been located so far. Another nine exposed horses, eight mares and one stallion, are still actively being traced in the U.S. All positive horses, and all exposed horses that have been located, are currently under quarantine or hold order. Testing and treatment protocols are being put into action for all located horses. Treatment consists of topical cleansing with disinfectants and systemic antibiotics. The source of the outbreak(s) is still inconclusive.

For additional information please visit the following web-sites:
http://www.oie.int
http://www.aphis.usda.gov
http://www.inspection.gc.ca

In the UK, isolation of the contagious equine metritis organism (CEMO) is notifiable by law. In confirmed cases, Defra will initially ask breeders and veterinary surgeons to comply with the HBLB Code of Practice. The British horse industry has reacted to the current CEM-outbreak in the U.S. by issuing an update of the HBLB Code of Practice, which is reproduced below:
INTERIM UPDATE TO HBLB CODES OF PRACTICE ON CEM – JANUARY 2009

The United States Department of Agriculture has reported the isolation of Taylorella equigenitalis, the cause of Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM), from multiple horses in multiple states of USA and in Canada. As a result, the Horserace Betting Levy Board’s (HBLB) Codes of Practice sub committee make the following recommendations for the 2009 season:

• All mares imported into the participating countries (France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland and Italy), who have been in North America (USA and Canada) since 1st January 2008 are considered ‘high risk’.

• Two clitoral swabs (fossa and sinuses) should be taken at least seven days apart and an endometrial swab taken during an oestrus period prior to covering.

• Full culture results (aerobic and microaerophilic) should be obtained from an HBLB Approved Laboratory (GB) or other National Approved Laboratories in France, Germany, Ireland or Italy.

• Swab results should be obtained before covering and mare that has been in North America after 1st January 2008.

The HBLB Codes of Practice are available online at http://www.hblb.org.uk/sndFile.php?fileID=21

Copies are also available on request from equine.grants@hblb.org.uk or telephone 020 7259 8375