

Equine Health Committee Report

April 5, 2005

The Equine Health Committee met on Tuesday, April 5, 2005 from 1:30 PM to 5:00 PM CST, during the NIAA 2005 Annual Meeting in St. Paul Minnesota, with 35 people present. Dr. Peter Timoney served as the Chair and Ms. Amy Mann served as the Vice-Chair.

The committee session focused on current equine health concerns. The following speakers presented relevant information pertaining to equine health.

Amelita Fachianno, Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA): Proposed National Control Program:

Presentation well attended with good discussion following. Discussion focused on concerns of states over implementing and enforcing proposed program. Proposal is intended to show a new approach to EIA with hopes that something different might be considered with regard to EIA. Question of whether more benefit could be achieved through proposal than is currently being achieved. Suggestion was made that regionalization may eventually provide more freedom for horse owners.

Ms. Amy Mann, Piroplasmiasis: Technical Issues Surrounding Use of c-ELISA: Presentation highlighted implementation of the c-ELISA and the problems that followed at National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL). Ms. Mann gave a history of how the cELISA was developed and noted that after ARS transferred the technology to NVSL, alterations to the reagents used in the tests were made. Consequently, the changes produced unreliable results and ultimately forced USDA to withdraw the cELISA as the import test for piroplasmiasis. Mann underscored the industry's desire to use the cELISA as the import test for piroplasmiasis. She also stated that the horse industry would not support re-institution of the cELISA until it was clear all problems associated with NVSL's execution of the test are resolved.

Dr. Josie Traub-Dargatz, 2005 Equine NAHMS Study : Dr. Traub-Dargatz shared the plans for the 2005 Equine NAHMS Study, which has just gotten underway. She explained that the study would look at equine health and equine health management practices at premises with more than 5 horses and at equine events. The expectation is that the final report of the study will be available in the middle of 2006.

Dr. S. Swenson Vesicular Stomatitis: 2004 Experience : Dr. Sabrina Swensen of NVSL, APHIS, USDA briefed the committee on the outbreaks of Vesicular Stomatitis during the summer and fall in Texas, New Mexico and Colorado. She gave the committee an overview of VS and indicated that this past outbreak of VS behaved similar to the outbreaks seen in the 1990's, following the rivers north from Texas into New Mexico and Colorado. Discussion ensued with regard to why Colorado's cases seemed to last later into the fall, early winter. Historically, that would not be unusual in addition, it was mentioned that Colorado had some unusually warm weather late into the year. It was also mentioned that Texas animal health officials had seen cases in areas they had not expected to find cases and it was questioned whether that indicated a change in the epidemiology of the disease. It was determined that the disease is a national disease, although in recent history it has only occurred in certain western regions giving VS the reputation of being only a western states problem.

Dr. Annette Whiteford, West Nile Virus: 2004 Update : Dr. Whiteford discussed the state of California's experience with WNV this past year. She acknowledged that horse owners in the state had been fairly ready for the outbreak, having seen its progression west. Nonetheless, they did have a high number of cases, including in vaccinated horses. Also noted was the higher rate of mortality associated with the disease.

Dr. Tim Cordes, Disease Reclassification Office of International Epizootics (OIE): What does this mean? Equine Viral Arteritis (EVA): Proposed National Control Program : Dr. Cordes gave an

extensive overview of the new OIE list of diseases in which the former List A and List B diseases were combined into one list. This was done to simplify the list of important diseases needing reporting but also to dispel the myth that the A List contained diseases that were somehow more important than those on the B List. He also mentioned that OIE had expanded its reporting requirements to include "evidence of infection". This triggered significant discussion within the committee.

Dr. Cordes also gave a presentation regarding Equine Viral Arteritis and the efforts to establish a post-entry screening test to determine the EVA virus status of imported stallions and semen. He gave a history of how the issue has developed and progressed and reported that the hold up now is due to the legal interpretations of what can and cannot be done under the SPS agreements of the WTO.

The Committee encouraged that a national meeting be hosted by the American Horse Council with significant participation from USDA to address the significant domestic and international issues related to EVA. A position statement to this affect was adopted during the business session of the meeting.

Old Business: None

New Business:

- There were no new resolutions accepted.
- 1 new position statement was adopted on EVA
- 2 existing resolutions were amended
- 1 existing resolutions was removed

General discussion: The Equine Health Committee had excellent attendance this year and lively, engaged discussion. It was in sharp contrast to the last two meetings of this committee. In addition to the excellent agenda, the fact that the committee was not scheduled up against significant competing interests helped the attendance factor significantly. However, at the time of the business session the attendance did drop precipitously.

Committee Session adjourned at 5:00 pm.