

Questions and Answers: Testing of Additional Stallions for Contagious Equine Metritis

Q. What is contagious equine metritis?

A. Contagious equine metritis (CEM) is a transmissible, exotic, venereal disease of horses caused by the bacterium *Taylorella equigenitalis*. For more detailed information about CEM, please visit the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) factsheet, "Contagious Equine Metritis." It is available at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/content/printable_version/fs_ahcem.pdf.

Q. Why is there a concern about CEM?

A. CEM is a serious disease because it is highly contagious. Infected mares can experience temporary infertility for one or more breeding cycles, depending on the severity and location of the infection(s) and other factors. When coupled with the fact that mares can be bred only during certain seasons, CEM can have a devastating effect on equine reproductive efficiency. If CEM were to become established in the United States, the horse industry would suffer great economic losses.

There is no evidence that *T. equigenitalis* affects people.

Q. Why are additional stallions being tested for this disease?

A. This testing complements the current CEM outbreak investigation and response in the United States that is now nearing successful completion. As of early January 2010, 94 percent of the horses involved in the current outbreak are known to be free of *T. equigenitalis*, with testing of the remaining horses to be completed soon.

Test results from the additional stallions will be used to increase national and international confidence that the overall prevalence of *T. equigenitalis* in the United States is very low, if it is present at all. APHIS is confident that the results of this survey will aid in

its efforts to return to CEM-free status, and reduce or remove the testing requirements for exported horses and semen.

Q. What horses will be tested?

A. The testing will focus on breeding stallions. The goal is to sample 3,000 of the most active breeding stallions from around the United States. Enrollment of eligible stallions will be voluntary.

Q. What horses will *not* be tested?

A. Since this additional testing complements current outbreak tracking, stallions known to be associated with the current CEM outbreak will not be included in this new sampling effort. Mares and stallions not actively breeding will not be tested.

Q. What constitutes an "active breeding stallion" in this survey?

A. Active breeding stallions are considered to be those that had semen collected or that were bred to a mare by live cover in 2008 or 2009. Of those stallions, the highest priority for sampling will be those:

- Collected or bred at a facility where at least one other stallion was collected or bred on the same day;
- Collected or bred on two or more days in 2008 or in 2009;
- Collected or bred in both 2008 and 2009; or
- Potentially collected or bred outside the United States.

Q. When does this testing start?

A. The sampling will begin in February 2010.

Q. How will the horses be tested?

A. All samples are to be collected by accredited equine practitioners. A State or Federal official does not need to be present.

- For all active breeding stallions to be sampled:
- Sampling will consist of one set of three swabs for culture, with each of the three swabs in the set collected from a different site;
 - APHIS will pay for the diagnostic testing of one set of three swabs, but collection and testing of any additional swab sets is at the stallion owner's discretion and expense;
 - Stallions will not be eligible for sampling if they have been tested for *T. equigenitalis* in the previous 6 months;

- At any one facility or premises, the maximum number of stallions to be sampled will be 50 percent of the total number of active breeding stallions present, but not more than 20 stallions per facility;
- Any stallion found positive for *T. equigenitalis* as part of this voluntary testing effort will be quarantined, then treated and re-tested at APHIS' expense (including practitioner fees) until determined to be negative; and
- APHIS will pay for costs and procedures and for associated tracing, testing, and treatment for mares and stallions exposed to a stallion found to be positive. Per the current outbreak protocol, APHIS pays for diagnostics but not for sample collection, test mares, or treatment.

Q. How many stallions will be tested from each State?

A. Specific sampling targets have been set for each State in order to produce an overall national sampling total of 3,000 active breeding stallions. Please consult Table 1 below for the specific sampling target numbers for stallions in each State. The numbers are based on National Animal Health Monitoring System estimates of breeding stallion populations in each State, and on the number of equine practitioners in each State that have indicated a reproduction focus to their practice (as compiled in the directory of the American Association of Equine Practitioners).

Table 1. Number of Active Breeding Stallions to be Sampled in Each State			
Eastern Region States	Stallions to be Sampled	Western Region States	Stallions to be Sampled
Alabama	48	Alaska	0
Connecticut	10	Arizona	55
Delaware	5	Arkansas	32
Florida	133	California	187
Georgia	35	Colorado	72
Illinois	59	Hawaii	0
Indiana	77	Idaho	63
Kentucky	333	Iowa	50
Maine	6	Kansas	44
Maryland	32	Louisiana	44
Massachusetts	16	Missouri	82
Michigan	63	Montana	53
Minnesota	62	Nebraska	38
Mississippi	40	Nevada	21
New Hampshire	2	New Mexico	39
New Jersey	35	North Dakota	17
New York	102	Oklahoma	94
North Carolina	49	Oregon	62
Ohio	107	South Dakota	27
Pennsylvania	101	Texas	327
Rhode Island	1	Utah	28
South Carolina	36	Washington	61
Tennessee	91	Wyoming	22
Vermont	4		
Virginia	65		
West Virginia	17		
Wisconsin	53		
Total	1,582	Total	1,418

Q. What do I need to do during and after the tests?

A. No quarantine restrictions will be imposed while test results are pending. Unless a stallion is found to be positive for *T. equigenitalis*, no post-sampling treatment or other action is required.

Q. What if my horse tests positive for CEM?

A. Any stallion found positive for *T. equigenitalis* as part of this voluntary testing effort will be quarantined, then treated and re-tested at APHIS' expense (including practitioner fees) until determined to be negative. Stored semen from a positive stallion would also need to be quarantined until it can be determined if it is safe to use.

Q. What's the benefit of CEM testing for me and my horse?

A. First, this is an opportunity to determine that your stallion likely does not have the bacterium that causes CEM and that he is not spreading it to other horses.

Second, you may need a negative test result in order to have your stallion collected or bred at a commercial facility this year. If so, this testing offers a lower cost way for you to get the testing done.

Third, if you have any reason to suspect that your stallion is positive, this is a chance to find out with minimal financial impact. Any stallion found positive as part of this national testing effort will be treated and re-tested at USDA's expense. If you wait, however, and the horse is found positive in the future—for example, as part of an investigation of another CEM-positive horse—you will be responsible for the cost of treatment and re-testing of your stallion, including the cost of test mares needed to confirm a negative status.

Q. Who do I contact to volunteer my horse for CEM testing?

A. Stallion owners or accredited equine practitioners interested in participating should contact a Veterinary Services area office or a State animal health official's office to volunteer to participate. You can find contact information for your nearest office on the following Web pages:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/area_offices/
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/sregs/official.html>.

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