

USDA to Test Additional Stallions to Detect Contagious Equine Metritis

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) veterinary services (VS) program announced a plan to test 3,000 stallions for *Taylorella equigenitalis*, the bacterium that causes contagious equine metritis (CEM) beginning in February 2010. CEM is a highly contagious sexually transmitted disease among horses that may cause vaginal discharge and infertility in mares, although stallions typically develop no signs of illness. Stallions and mares can become chronic carriers of CEM and be sources of infection for future outbreaks.

The testing will focus on breeding stallions from around the United States. It will not include horses involved in the current CEM outbreak as they are undergoing a more extensive testing regimen.

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.

Enrollment of eligible stallions will be voluntary, however it will provide a great opportunity for horse owners to test their stallions with fewer costs incurred. All samples must be collected by accredited equine practitioners. APHIS will pay for laboratory diagnostic testing costs and for shipment of samples to an approved CEM laboratory, but will not pay for sample collection costs. No quarantine restrictions will be imposed while test results are pending. Unless the stallion is found to be positive, no post-sampling treatment or other action is required.

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 be quarantined until it can be determined safe to use.

APHIS will pay for the shipping of samples and the laboratory diagnostic testing associated with tracing, testing and treatment of horses exposed to a stallion found to be positive through this additional testing. APHIS will not pay for sample collection, test mares or treatment.

Costs and procedures for associated tracing and for the testing and treatment of horses exposed to a stallion found to be positive through this additional testing will be the same as in the current outbreak response in which APHIS pays for the shipping of samples and the laboratory diagnostic testing, but does not pay for sample collection, test mares or treatment.

Stallion owners or accredited equine practitioners interested in participating should contact their local VS area office or state animal health official's office to volunteer. 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>.

Detailed information about this sampling and testing plan and sample categories of interest can be obtained from the following Web page: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/content/printable_version/faq_cem2010.pdf.

Note to Stakeholders: Stakeholder announcements and other APHIS information are available on the Internet. Go to the APHIS home page at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov> and click on the "Newsroom" button. For additional information on this topic, contact Jim Barrett at (301) 734-6405 or e-mail: jim.barrett@aphis.usda.gov.

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