

MEMORANDUM

To: AHC Organizations

From: American Horse Council

Date: December 19, 2008

Re: Contagious Equine Metritis Found in the U.S.

The Kentucky Department of Agriculture has announced that a quarter horse stallion has tested positive for Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM), a foreign animal disease not found in the United States.

The 16-year old stallion was undergoing routine testing as a preliminary step for shipping frozen semen to the United Kingdom when it received a positive test result for CEM. This index horse and other exposed horses are now under quarantine, while the index horse receives treatment for the disease and exposed horses are tested to determine if they are infected.

The index horse was moved to Kentucky in February 2008 from Texas, where he was located for his entire breeding career. All breeding with this stallion has been done artificially with no live covers. During the 2008 breeding season, 22 quarter horse stallions from various states were bred on the Kentucky farm where the index stallion is located. Thirteen of the stallions were moved to other states at the end of the breeding season, and one was moved to another farm in Kentucky. The index stallion was bred artificially to 44 mares both on the farm and by shipped semen. All involved states have been contacted and testing, quarantines, and a full investigation are currently underway to find any potentially infected horses and to determine where this disease came from, since it is caused from an organism not know to exist in the U.S.

There is great concern over the ramifications of this situation on domestic and international transport, as many countries only accept horses that are certified to come from a country free of CEM. The United States Department of Agriculture and Kentucky are in discussions with several countries to allow horses that come from a premises free of CEM while this disease investigation is underway, which will allow the continued transport of unaffected horses.

The American Horse Council has been in contact with Kentucky Department of Agriculture and USDA representatives regarding this situation. A letter was sent to USDA from the AHC expressing concern and urging USDA to move forward quickly in implementing unified and cohesive protocols between all states involved to locate and test all involved horses. We want to make sure that this investigation is executed as quickly and efficiently as possible to protect the U.S. horse industry from further spread of the disease and ensure that the U.S. can maintain its status of being free of CEM and allow continued movement of horses.

Contagious Equine Metritis is a transmissible, exotic venereal disease in horses. It usually results in infertility in mares and, on rare occasions, can cause mares to spontaneously abort. Infected stallions exhibit no clinical signs but can carry the CEM bacteria for years. CEM is commonly transmitted during sexual intercourse but also may be transmitted indirectly through artificial insemination or contact with contaminated hands or objects. There is no evidence that CEM affects people. The disease can be treated with disinfectants and antibiotics.