

## Texas Equine Disease Outbreak Impacts New Mexico Industry

The importation of horses into New Mexico from several Texas counties has been severely restricted due to an outbreak of Equine Piroplasmosis.

The New Mexico Livestock Board (NMLB) has prohibited the importation of horses that have been in a county with confirmed cases of the disease within the past 21 days regardless of their origin. Impacted counties include Kleberg, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells and Brooks.

Equine Piroplasmosis is a blood parasite found in horses that causes blood loss, anemia, debilitation, and death in some cases. Equine Piroplasmosis is primarily transmitted by certain species of ticks, but can also be transmitted by vectors including other biting insects, needles, tattoo instruments and contaminated serum and blood products. The current southeastern Texas outbreak appears to be tick transmitted.

Currently, New Mexico has no known cases of the disease. The NMLB is working closely with the New Mexico horse breeding and racing industries to implement procedures to protect and maintain the viability and reputation of those industries.

Horses from Texas may enter New Mexico with a certificate of veterinary inspection (CVI) dated within 14 days of importation including a description of horses in the shipment, a negative Equine Piroplasmosis test, a physical address for the origin and final destination of the animals, equine infectious anemia information for each animal, and the following statement, **“The animals listed on this CVI are not displaying signs of equine piroplasmosis nor any other communicable disease. None of the animals listed on this CVI have been in a Texas county, that has confirmed cases of equine piroplasmosis, during the last 21 days. All animals on this CVI were inspected for ticks, including ear ticks, and treated for ticks if necessary, at the time of the inspection.”**

Consultation with New Mexico State University entomologists indicate that New Mexico has the climate in many areas to sustain this disease, which is primarily transmitted by ticks.

Horses considered at high risk for the disease are:

- Texas horses from quarantined counties and those exposed to infected horses .
- Match race horses racing at non sanctioned tracks
- Imported horses from countries with Equine Piroplasmosis.

There is a risk of infection in all horses imported into New Mexico from Texas over the past four years, and in those imported from Piroplasmosis positive counties in the past ten years. Owners would be wise to investigate the risk and have these horses retested for both strains of Piroplasmosis.

Equine Piroplasmosis could have serious ramifications for New Mexico horse breeders if it became established in the state. The cost of lost production and performance, and restrictions imposed by other states would be significant.

The United States has been considered free of Equine Piroplasmosis since the mid- 1980s. The free status was reached after the expenditure of well over \$12 million dollars of state, federal and industry dollars to eliminate the parasite from Florida.

Outbreaks have occurred in Florida, Missouri and Kansas in the past two years, and have been traced to high risk horse racing on non-sanctioned race tracks. These outbreaks appear to be due to transmission by way of needles or contaminated blood products. Some of these infected horses are still in circulation in the United States.

A national working group has been convened to give the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) some input as to how to proceed on a national basis. With current information and technology, the industry now has the opportunity to eliminate the disease from most areas and to confine the disease to endemic areas in a few geographical areas.