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December 16, 2009

EQUINE PIROPLASMOSIS:

Equine Piroplasmosis is a blood parasite of horses, the disease causes blood loss anemia, debilitation, and death in some cases. Equine Piroplasmosis is primarily transmitted by certain species of ticks. In addition mechanical vectors of the disease such as biting insects, needles, tattoo instruments, contaminated serum and blood products are capable of transmitting the disease. The current Texas outbreak appears to be tick transmitted.

The previous recent outbreaks appear to have been iatrogenic and related to transmission by way of mechanical means.

The United States has been considered free of Equine Piroplasmosis since the mid-1980's. 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.

During the last two years, outbreaks have occurred in Florida, Missouri and Kansas. These outbreaks have been traced to high risk horse racing on non-sanctioned race tracks.

A sero-prevalence study recently conducted by USDA shows that a low level of Equine Piroplasmosis does exist in the United States.

It appears that the testing procedures to clear horses for import from Equine Piroplasmosis countries have allowed infected horses to enter the United States.

Currently the state of Texas is experiencing an outbreak of Equine Piroplasmosis. At this time the outbreak is centered in Kleberg County Texas, but exposure and positive horses have been found in fourteen states and several other counties in Texas. The true extent of the outbreak is unknown at this time.

The New Mexico Livestock Board, in cooperation with the New Mexico Racing Commission, has entered into a proactive program to protect the New Mexico Racing industry as well as the New Mexico exhibition and breeding industry from the introduction of Equine Piroplasmosis into the New Mexico Equine industry.

Currently all horses entering New Mexico from Texas are required to present a negative Equine Piroplasmosis test. In addition all horses entering a New Mexico race track are required to show evidence of a negative Equine Piroplasmosis test.

Current ongoing testing has revealed three Equine Piroplasmosis positive horses residing in New Mexico. These horses were destined to race at Sunland Park. These Piroplasmosis-affected horses have not entered the race track.

At this time the horses are under strict quarantine awaiting confirmatory testing. The affected horses are being moved to an isolation quarantine facility. Further investigation is being conducted by the New Mexico Livestock Board and the United States Department of Agriculture Veterinary Services.

Horses considered High risk are:

- Texas horses from quarantined counties and those exposed to infected horses.
- Horses exposed to unapproved medications containing equine serum or blood
- Imported horses from countries with Equine Piroplasmosis.

All racing horses are being tested prior to being allowed to race, therefore there should not be any interruption of the racing schedule.

A national working group has been formed to formulate a national response to this out break of Equine Piroplasmosis. Recommendations to USDA are anticipated in early March of 2010.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave E. Fly, D.V.M.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dave E. Fly, D.V.M.
State Veterinarian
New Mexico