

The reports of the working groups

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SUMMARIES OF WORKSHOP REPORTS

Workshop 1: Prioritisation of diseases for which common regulations/requirements should be established for temporary importation

Government representatives

The group discussed and agreed that venereal diseases should be controlled before export of a horse and that therefore, in case of competition horses who are not supposed to engage in reproductive activities during their short stay in-country, regulation of these diseases does not have priority.

The group considered that vector-borne diseases, viral diseases and zoonotic diseases would have the highest economic impact if they would be introduced into the MENA region by importation of horses.

They valued that the CVRL as OIE Reference Laboratory was available for testing of horses to the region, but encouraged capacity building also in other national laboratories, mainly in view of reducing the turnaround time for sample testing.

They concluded that priority diseases for common regulations should be zoonotic and transboundary diseases.

Workshop 1: Collaboration between private and FEI/IFHA veterinarian, transportation issues

1.1. National Equestrian Federations (NFs)

The group commenced by listing some of the strength of the NFs:

- Existing Network among the NFs and sharing of best practice and knowledge;
- Already established and well enforced regulations at FEI events on identification, microchipping and biosecurity;
- Some NFs have already developed successful collaborations with governments such as Oman (could be used as an example of best practice).

They also listed the perceived weaknesses of the NFs:

- Not enough linkage between the National Federations and the Vet services;
- Linkage of NF registering systems to the FEI database - a common and central database to be used and easily accessed by the government services is needed;
- Lack of evidence of the economic impact of the industry at the national level;
- Insufficient recognition of the importance of National Head Veterinarians and their role with the respective government counterparts by National Federation leadership

- At times lack of understanding of Government requirements and the rationale behind them.

To improve on those points, the group formulated some recommendations:

- Establish good communication and shared responsibility with the Veterinary Services on equine matters;
- Consider creating an independent audit body to inspect for compliance with the management guidelines for the sub-population. This body should be neutral - or a combination of government and industry collaboration (PPP);
- Promote regional cooperation and harmonisation of movements' regulations with neighbouring countries, which at times were seen as more difficult than those for other continents.
- NFs to be provided with a list of items to be added in the database such as information on passport, trainer, owner, stables, movement to harmonise national databases with the FEI one.

Transport issues

The group listed the key problems:

- The preparation of all necessary documents was considered hugely time consuming.
- Customs are considered a main obstacle in terms of bureaucratic processes
- The change of identity – horses having different names and passports
- The validity of the results of blood tests which presently remained valid only for a period of 30 days.

And discussed the following proposals as solutions:

- Provide a travel plan in and out of the country including health certificates and analysis of blood tests, to customs
- A common database, mandatory microchipping and FEI passport
- Adopt the HHP concept and create trust with the Veterinary Services that NFs are capable of implementing it

The group came up with the following conclusions for the NFs:

- List relevant aspects necessary to incorporate into the common database - (FEI managed). Ascertain the collection of all necessary information on HHP horses regionally, as regional specificities could be included in the database.
- Clearly describe the process of registration of the HHP compartments.
- Dialogue and collaborate with their respective governments on (i) Border issues and (ii) biosecurity at events. Ensure that their National Head Veterinarian has a good relationship with the government Veterinary Services. Think of means to access governments at a higher political level.
- Provide to FEI – OIE an estimation of how much international horse movement is occurring in each NFs respective country and the destination of these movements
- Provide evidence of the economic value of the industry at national level
- Ascertain the governments that the industry will bear the cost of its part of the HHP system

In order to get some of the information required to implement some of these recommendations and conclusions the group suggested to send out a questionnaire to collect information on horse movements, importing and exporting countries and the industry's economic value at national levels.

1.2. National Racing Authorities (NRA)

The group started their discussions by listing the main challenges as perceived by the NRAs:

- Lack of transparency and information sharing, e.g. when new rules and quarantine requirements are introduced by Government
- Government is slow to adopt available OIE standards, e.g. zoning, to expedite acceptance of facilities for racing
- Government can set tough conditions that deter international competitions, rather than setting practical or risk based conditions
- A lack of experience by Government veterinarians with horses can lead to impractical application of rules
- Lack of institutional knowledge transfer when staff changes in Veterinary Services
- Lack of awareness by NRAs of Government veterinarians requirements
- The length of time to implement changes (e.g. GCC health certificate was developed in 2002 and implementation started in 2012)
- Lack of lay-over facilities for road transport
- Long delays at border crossing

The group proposed some solutions to address these challenges:

- Two-way communication between NRAs and Government can improve collaboration
- Regional collaboration on health requirements could improve the situation
- Formation of "liaison committees" to build trust between Veterinary Services and NFAs
- Use of advisors to act as mediators between NRAs and Governments

Workshop 2: Identify ways to harmonise health certification to facilitate international temporary horse movement

Government representatives

The group discussed the need for a harmonised import certificate and agreed that it would be desirable to have a regional certificate with which national certificates could be harmonised.

Regarding the diseases that would need to be included into this regional certificate, the group did not specify them but rather referred to the OIE listed diseases with reference to the equine health status of the exporting country.

Testing for diseases should only be done for priority diseases, however, the group did not specify what their priority diseases were.

The group did not advocate for mandatory pre-export or post-arrival quarantine, but proposed that horses should be kept under supervision of the Veterinary Services

In conclusion, the group recommended that cooperation between the Veterinary Services and the industry should be strengthened.

Workshop 2: Biosecurity and quarantine management

NOTE: NFs discussed for the first half of this workshop amongst themselves and were then joined by Veterinary Service representatives for the 2nd part of the workshop

2.1. National Equestrian Federations (NFs)

The group discussed the different aspects of biosecurity measures that NFs would have to implement under the HHP concept:

1. Biosecurity at the home stable
2. Biosecurity during transport to and from the event
3. Biosecurity at the event

Ad 1: the onus is on the owner of the stable to manage the biosecurity protocols in such a way that it is ensured that HHP standards are complied with. The HHP standard of the horse should be approved by the Veterinary Services, while the NFs should record all HHP stables and horses. All HHP horses and stables should be entered in the HHP database, with regular updates.

Ad 2: clear biosecurity standards need to be available/developed and applied. Owners of horses, transport companies, Organising Committees (OC) and NFs must share all responsibilities. Available routes, resting places and lay-overs must be written in the draft schedule by OC and NF

Ad 3: FEI regulations currently determine biosecurity at all events. At the event the OC is responsible for applying the biosecurity principles, and this is controlled by the FEI officials.

When NFs met with Veterinary Service representatives, they addressed the following questions:

1. Does a person appointed to equine affairs exist within the government structures?

Most Government representatives considered that they had such a person, but thought that their role and active cooperation with the industry should be strengthened. Furthermore, they were not aware of the important role of the NFs *Head Veterinarian*, who is meant to be the liaison person to Government on the side of the NFs.

2. What are the roles of the different stakeholders in the implementation of the HHP concept?

General considerations:

- The HHP concept needs to be well defined and developed based on existing principles such as zoning, compartmentalisation and the inclusion of additional code chapters and guidance, if necessary by OIE.
- Cost shall be borne mainly by the industry. The general cost was considered as less important than the disharmonised approach in place currently.

- It became apparent that in some countries no database for horses exists – therefore the HHP database would allow for the Veterinary Services to access one. This database would need to be updated regularly and would include all necessary aspects: identification, traceability, vaccinations etc.
- Means of identification already in place were considered very important.

Considerations by the Veterinary services:

- Good and close collaboration and communication with industry concerning veterinary health certification
- Strong risk assessment required
- Surveillance in and around the compartments
- Access to a full schedule of events was seen as really useful
- Sufficient time should be given to the procedures implicated in providing health certificates
- Separation of HHP horses considered of vital importance
- Specific form of identification for the HHP horse was also seen as important
- Countries /regions where HHP facilities exist should be communicated and known by all

Considerations by National Federations:

- NFs should provide proof of the economic importance of the industry within their countries to their respective government representatives
- Organisation and management of the compartment for an event and at the home stables was seen as the responsibility of the National Federation. THE government would only need to approve the sites
- NFs to ensure that events at the national level and HHP stables should be communicated to the Veterinary Services - FEI should consider including them (national events) in their database
- NFs should work with their national Veterinary Services counterparts, so as to facilitate respective understanding and communication

Considerations by the FEI:

- Database should include all details necessary for the management of the HHP concept. These details should be determined in collaboration with the NFs, Veterinary services, FEI and the OIE.
- Event schedules should be accessible to all concerned parties but it would concern only HHP competitions – higher level international events.
- It was considered important to produce a briefing paper for the NFs to have at their disposal addressing the government concerns such as:
 - Fear of complication
 - Fear of cost
 - Lack of control

2.2. National Racing Authorities (NRAs)

NOTE: NRAs discussed for the first half of this workshop amongst themselves and were then joint by Veterinary Service representatives for the 2nd part of the workshop

The NRAs first discussed the applicability of the HHP concept to the way racing is already organised in the region and they found several challenges for the existing management system:

- How could trainers keep training /competing their horses while undergoing the qualification process?
- For some countries the HHP certification is more complicated than the existing certificates
- Therefore it might have limited application for racing, for example for new countries trying to enter existing racing circuits or for the import of horses for competition from countries with disease concerns
- Costs of the HHP concept appear too high

They identified the following stakeholders involved in the application of the HHP concept:

Owners, rider/trainer, Government Veterinary Services of importing and exporting country; shipping agent; event organiser; laboratory; breeding and industry in general; quarantine vets; horses.

When discussing specific biosecurity aspects, the group concluded that biosecurity needs to be applied from the home stable, during transport to, and at the event venue. then throughout the return journey to the home stable. Disease risk can be minimised, even for those diseases with carrier status. However, there were doubts that biosecurity measures alone could minimise the risk of AHS and glanders.

When Government representatives joined the group during the 2nd part of the discussions, the following considerations were noted:

Consideration for Veterinary Services:

- Countries should harmonise the list of notifiable diseases in their countries
- Countries should harmonise the requirements and specifications for vaccinations
- There should be approved vaccination schedules and registration of vaccine should be assured
- There should be approved isolation facilities at border entry points available and the treating veterinarians in these facilities should be well trained and skilled
- Close cooperation between VS and NRAs is needed for privately operated quarantine stations
- There was concern about races that were not sanctioned nor supervised by the NRA

Considerations for NRAs:

- NRAs should supply Veterinary Services with an event schedule and expected number of participating horses from outside the country well in advance, preferably annually.
- Veterinary Services should be informed about intended dates for export for competition in view of timing for veterinary export inspection

- Information of horse identification should be shared with VS
 - NRAs should inform VS in case of suspected disease outbreaks
 - Qualified and experienced staff should travel with the horses during long land transport
 - VS should have guidelines for transport duration, rest periods and for welfare during transport
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