Preliminary Outbreak Assessment

Equine Infectious Anaemia in Germany

15th December 2014  Ref: VITT/1200 EIA in Germany

Disease Report

Germany has reported two outbreaks of EIA in Lower Saxony. In the first, three out of ten horses tested positive, and in the second, two out of 35 horses have tested positive. The horses were humanely destroyed and disease control measures were put in place on the remaining horses present.

There is no information about the source of infection: whether the animals testing positive were recent imports into the region, or if clinical signs were observed.

Situation Assessment

Equine infectious anaemia is reported periodically in equidae in Western Europe. It is a disease which can remain clinically “silent” in infected horses for several years and then may be detected as a result of the horse being stressed, having concurrent disease or being tested for routine surveillance. The disease is slow spreading and occurs through sexual contact, iatrogenic contact (using surgical equipment without appropriate disinfection, infected blood products etc.) and rarely through mechanical vector transmission. Only a small proportion of infected equidae show clinical signs, and those signs can be mild and mistaken for other husbandry problems.
The situation across the EU this year has been improving with fewer cases reported in Romania and Italy where disease has been endemic. However the nature of the infection in equidae means we cannot be certain of disease freedom based purely on the lack of clinical disease and occasional sporadic outbreaks should be expected.

According to Traces, the EU trade notification system, there have been no consignments of horses or other equidae moved to the UK in the last two months from the affected region.

**Conclusion**

The risk of EIA introduction into the UK as a result of these outbreaks is considered to be negligible (that is, “so rare it does not merit consideration”) due to the lack of trade, nevertheless, this is a timely event to remind keepers of horses and other equidae that the infection can remain subclinical for several years and recent imports are not necessarily the only animals which could test positive. It is therefore important to be aware of all the clinical signs of EIA and other notifiable diseases of horses and to promptly report suspicions of disease to a veterinary surgeon.

We will continue to report on the situation as regular updates or if significant changes in the epidemiology of the disease occur.
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References