



USDA Five Year Equine Health Business Plan

Introduction

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has developed and published its five year Equine Health Business Plan. The Plan outlines the steps that USDA will undertake to partner with the states, tribes, the horse industry and others to safeguard the health of U.S. horses and the equine industry over the next five years.

AHC Comments

On November 1, 2014, the American Horse Council provided comments to USDA on the plan. The AHC supported the overall business plan and offered several specific comments.

Funding. The AHC noted that disease outbreaks continue to adversely affect the industry. The AHC questioned whether the amount suggested by USDA to fund the plan, \$500,000, was adequate to safeguard the \$102 billion dollar a year horse industry. It recommended that USDA allocate additional funds for equine health.

Equine Commodity Group. In order to make the Plan as effective as possible, the AHS asked that the Equine Commodity Group be fully staffed. It is currently one position short.

Foreign and Emerging Disease Threat. Updating regulations on importing horses from CEM countries is important, the comments noted. This will assure our trading partners that the U.S. is serious about our CEM-free standing with the world. It also recommended maintaining the current 60 day quarantine for horses coming into the U.S. from Saudi Arabia.

Improve Health of Equine. One of the goals of the Plan is to improve the health of the horse population by supporting the control of Equine Infectious Anemia. The AHCV noted that recent incidents of EIA in California and the southwest involving illegal racing have concerned the AHC. There has been a surge in EIA cases and many of the horses also present cases of Equine Piroplasmiasis. State authorities, and the AHC, are concerned that these horses, which could move into other areas of the U.S. after racing, may spread EIA.

In light of these circumstances, the AHC noted that it is no longer opposed to the Department's proposing its rule on EIA so that the industry could have an opportunity to comment on it.

Support of National Equine Health Plan. The AHC appreciated USDA's recognition of the importance of finalizing the National Equine Health Plan (NEHP)/Equine Disease Communication Center (EDCC).

Transport of Equines to Slaughter. The AHC supported strong enforcement of the regulations under the Commercial Transport of Equines to Slaughter Act. The AHC was very involved with passage of that Act and the drafting and adoption of the regulations. There are no longer any facilities in the U.S. that slaughter/process horses for human consumption but there are still tens of thousands of horses going to Canada and Mexico each year for this purpose. One of USDA's many important duties is the enforcement of the regulations governing the shipment of horses to facilities in these countries. That responsibility has become even more important with the closing of the U.S. plants and the lengthening of the transport distance and duration. The AHC strongly supports the USDA enforcement of the current regulations.

AHC Position

The AHC supports USDA's efforts in creating the Five Year Equine Health Business Plan that will result in a system that fits the needs and requirements of a growing industry.

