



agriculture, forestry & fisheries

Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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To: All individual horse owners
Breed Registering Authorities
Breed Societies
Artificial Insemination and Breeding Centres
Press and Media
SAVA
SAVC
SAEVA
EHF
SANEF
SAHRA

RE: FEEDBACK FROM CONTAGIOUS EQUINE METRITIS (CEM) WORKING GROUP MEETING OF 16 AUGUST 2016

The Directorate Animal Health would like to thank all involved parties for their support and compliance thus far with regard to CEM surveillance and control in our country. The extensive surveillance over the past five years has given us the confidence that the 2011 outbreak has been resolved.

The CEM Working Group was formed to progress self-declaration of country freedom and to refine and guide the way forward for a sustainable, cost effective and epidemiologically valid surveillance system, essential to maintain the disease free declaration. The working group, comprising of members from the equine industry and DAFF, had their first meeting on 16 August 2016, with the following outcomes:

1. The Directorate Animal Health is currently following up on the outstanding documentation necessary to close the remaining CEM cases open with the World Animal Health Organization (OIE). The imminent closure of these cases will officially close the 2011 CEM outbreak.

Once the end of outbreak has been declared, DAFF will commence with the preparation of an information dossier to the OIE in support of the country's self-declared CEM freedom. The Equine Health Fund (EHF), a major funder of this initiative, will be working with DAFF, via the working group, to develop and finalise the self-declaration dossier, including a refined, ongoing surveillance plan. Ongoing surveillance will be required to maintain the CEM disease free declaration. The EHF has made available a veterinary epidemiologist to assist in these efforts and DAFF would like to thank industry for this initiative.

2. The working group has made a suggestion to the Director Animal Health (DAH) to refine the current CEM surveillance requirements as follows:
 - a. The present census based surveillance will be replaced by an annual, random proportional surveillance program using PCR testing. This sampling will amount to a significantly lower number of registered stallions required to be tested per annum (approximately 300 stallions). Registered stallions will be randomly selected from stallion lists held by the breed registering authorities, with sampling of the selected stallions to be completed within the first eight months of each year-long surveillance period. For the first surveillance period of 1 July 2016 – 30 June 2017 sampling will need to be completed by 1 March 2017.
 - b. Targeted surveillance will continue in high risk breeding activities. All stallions involved in artificial breeding (i.e. artificial insemination (AI)) will require annual testing for CEM. No stallion can be used for collection of semen for AI without a CEM clearance certificate, and foals conceived by AI may also only be registered with their respective breed societies where a valid CEM clearance certificate for the stallion is available.
 - c. A valid CEM clearance certificate will not be a requirement for stallions that breed naturally or foals conceived from natural breeding, provided that the registering breed authority is able to show compliance with point a. above.
 - d. Should stallions be selected in the annual random sampling in addition to being involved in artificial breeding, then their CEM test results will be considered adequate to fulfill both surveillance types – i.e. a single test will provide both a result for the random survey and for the CEM clearance certificate for artificial breeding.

- e. Clearance certificates for both the relevant stallions and semen batches (see point 4 below) will continue to be issued by the Equine Research Centre based at the University of Pretoria.
- f. A surveillance report will be collated by members of the CEM Working Group on an annual basis, and surveillance activities will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that surveillance is scientifically justifiable, practical and cost effective.

Further information will be circulated once the surveillance proposal has been finalised. Please note that the above measures are subject to change pending further discussion of the CEM Working Group.

3. Regarding the matter of CEM clearance certificate exemptions for the registration of foals, the DAH supports the registration of foals where the respective stallion is in possession of a valid CEM clearance certificate that was issued within at least two years preceding the conception of the foal.

Should there be instances other than the above, whereby the CEM surveillance requirements have not been met but it is felt that a foal may be eligible for registration; the Directorate Animal Health welcomes applications for exemption to be submitted by the relevant registering authority to SandraDAC@daff.gov.za and NileshnieM@daff.gov.za along with supporting information including the reason for the stallion not having a valid CEM certificate, the most recent CEM clearance certificate issued for the stallion, details (name, identification, location and date of birth) of the foal/s, location and identification of the stallion/s and dam/s. These applications will be evaluated on the merits of each case and if found valid, a recommendation for the registration of the foal will be provided to the registering authority.

4. The use of frozen semen is only permitted from stallions that were in possession of a valid CEM clearance certificate at the time of collection. Batches of semen, including those collected prior to 2012, for which the CEM clearance certificate mentioned above does not exist or cannot be presented, will need to be tested prior to use. A minimum of three straws per batch are required to be submitted for testing and only once a CEM clearance certificate has been obtained for the batch may the semen be used. Applications for exemptions from this requirement may be submitted to SandraDAC@daff.gov.za and NileshnieM@daff.gov.za.

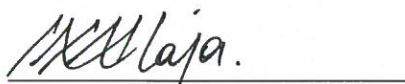
With regard to imported semen, the risk of CEM introduction is mitigated by means of pre-export CEM testing of the donor stallion/s by an agent identification test. The veterinary authority of the exporting country is required to certify these clauses

(among others). Therefore each batch of successfully imported semen does not need to be re-tested before use in South Africa provided that its import health certificate, issued by the veterinary authority of the exporting country, with corresponding batch number/s, is available as proof of CEM clearance.

5. The DAH currently awaits a formal approval from the breed registering authorities, following discussions with their various breed societies, regarding the suggestions of the working group in point 2 above, in addition to the finalised on-going surveillance proposal from industry to be submitted via the EHF. Should approval from the breed registering authorities be received timeously, it is envisaged that this surveillance proposal will be implemented within the current breeding season (i.e. 1 July 2016 through 30 June 2017). Until that time however, registration of foals from CEM clear stallions remain as per the letter of 11 August 2014 with requirements updated in the letter of 10 May 2016. Once the surveillance plan and change in requirements for registration set out in this letter are finalised, the DAH will institute these changes in a formal letter of communication.

In the interest of the animal health status of South Africa, the continued co-operation of all members of the horse industry in applying and promoting the required screening and control measures for CEM is much appreciated.

Kind regards,



Dr Mpho Maja
DIRECTOR: ANIMAL HEALTH
Date: 2016 -09- 0 1