

Equine Viral Arteritis in France

Measures until mid-September

The Monitoring Committee for Equine Viral Arteritis, plus representatives from the horse sector in Normandy, met on 23 July on the premises of the National Studs' Paris branch for a weekly update. The recommendations announced at the previous meeting of the Monitoring Committee are going to be applied systematically in certain regions. Riders, breeders, owners, event organisers, veterinarians, farriers, those identifying horses and any other person in direct contact with horses will have detailed instructions to follow in order to prevent the spread of the virus and locate any horses affected.

Active health monitoring

Veterinarians in the field who have dealt directly with the outbreaks in Orne and Eure remain vigilant and available. Diagnostic units have been mobilised (Frank Duncombe Departmental Laboratory, the French Food Safety Agency laboratory in Dozulé, the Pasteur Cerba equine virology laboratory), together with epidemiologists from the RESPE (Surveillance Network for Equine Pathologies). This network receives information from 'sentinel veterinarians' practising all over France.

Arteritis, a virus which may spread unobtrusively

The state of play as regards the spread of the equine arteritis virus shows that there are currently 16 outbreaks in Normandy (3 in Orne, 8 in Eure, 2 in Calvados, 2 in Manche and 1 in Seine Maritime). In addition, an atypical case has been reported in Landes but no connection with the virus identified in Normandy has been established to date.

It is not possible to refer to the recrudescence of the virus even though the eighth outbreak in Eure was discovered recently. The modes of infection of all the outbreaks have been clearly identified. We are now at the stage where we are taking stock of the disease. The horses that have tested positive show seroconversion: they have had arteritis and have fought the virus by making antibodies. The symptoms associated with infection are often very unobtrusive and only screening reveals acquired immunity.

Health measures have been taken as regards competitions

The French Equestrian Federation (FFE) and the French Horse Society (SHF) are going to give instructions to competition organisers.

In order to ensure continuity for equestrian competitions under satisfactory health conditions, in the case of the regions Upper and Lower Normandy, Brittany, Pays de la Loire, Île de France, Picardy and Centre, horses and ponies will have to have a veterinary certificate of good health* drawn up at least a week prior to the first day of the competition. This measure will be applied until 16 September inclusive.

This will have the advantage of making everyone more vigilant and enabling any secondary outbreaks to be detected. Such outbreaks are actually more

difficult to identify because the infection does not come directly from the semen of a stallion excreting [the virus] and the signs are often not easily visible. The outbreaks can be detected only by health checks.

Since breeding horse populations are more susceptible to the virus, breeding competitions in Normandy ([?]dressage [*modèles*] and gait for brood mares, foals, 2 year olds, 3 year olds and males) have been suspended until 31 August. In the surrounding regions, the organisers will have to show the same caution and will not be able to hold their events unless veterinary certificates are supplied for all participants.

**The veterinary certificate certifies the good health of the subject, the absence of signs of viral arteritis for 4 weeks and the fact that it does not come from an establishment which has had a case of arteritis in the last 30 days. An FFE/SHF press release published on the FFE and SHF websites and in the Official Bulletin for equestrian competitions and breeding trials will specify the arrangements for these certificates: www.ffe.compet.com and www.shf.eu.*

Continuation of identification rounds and measures for completing servicing

Identification at the place of residence is continuing on the basis of the health measures falling within good professional practice.

Gatherings of horses which could be organised for the purposes of their identification are being cancelled.

Stud farmers and artificial insemination centres are recommended not to receive new mares and to complete servicing within a closed circuit.

Better communication with veterinarians

In order to help veterinarians, who work most closely with the riders, breeders and owners of horses and are most involved in detecting cases of arteritis, health information will be sent to them regularly by the French Equine Veterinary Association (AVEF) and the national organisation for veterinary technical groups (SNGTV).

Monitoring Committee

This Monitoring Committee has been recognised as a source of useful information and is meeting every week. Its members are as follows: France Galop [Racecourse Management Body], Cheval français [Association for Trotting Horses], the National Federation of French Racecourses, the French Equestrian Federation, the French Horse Society, the French National Saddle Horses Association, the National Horse Federation, the French Federation for Ponies and Small Horses, France-Trait [Association for Draught Horses], the French Equine Veterinary Association, the Frank Duncombe Laboratory and the National Studs.