

## **EQUINE SPECIES WORKING GROUP**

Suite 700

1616 H Street, NW

Washington, DC 20006

### Equine Species Working Group Report to the NAIS Subcommittee

The ESWG was created to represent the horse industry's interest in the National Animal Identification System and to formulate recommendations outlining the parameters that the horse industry could operate within in order to comply with NAIS. Attached is the final report of the ESWG.

The National Animal Identification System has created many questions within the horse industry. In the considerable discussion that has surrounded the NAIS in the past year, a significant amount of misinformation and rumors overwhelmed the discussion of the horse industry's potential participation in the NAIS. It is not a particularly popular issue as a result. The primary focus of concern rests on two key points: identification and reporting of equine movement.

#### Identification

An important component in the development of the ESWG's recommendations is the understanding that the horse industry, because it is not a food production industry, has unique characteristics, including the recognition that the underpinning of the industry itself is the ability to move horses. At the same time, the ESWG understands the tremendous value of rapidly and effectively finding diseased and exposed horses in an equine disease emergency so that control and eradication can be achieved. The horse industry has a responsibility to ensure that the impact can be quickly managed and controlled to benefit the veterinary welfare of the horse and re-establish normal business practices. If standardization of the identification practices in the industry achieves this goal, it should be accomplished.

#### Movement Reporting

Whether it is for recreation, work, showing, racing or breeding, horses must move. Horse owners may take their horses next door to ride with a neighbor or travel thousands of miles to compete in a foreign country or travel several states on a rodeo circuit. This means that hundreds, if not thousands, of equine movements occur each day. Finding a system in which all equine movements are reported cannot be achieved.

To require that an owner or a premises manager report every one of those movements would encumber the industry so significantly that it could not continue to operate. For this reason, the ESWG focused its approach on those horses that are at the greatest risk of being exposed to and/or spreading a disease. In recognizing the heavy burden that would be placed on horse owners or premises managers/owners by a reporting mechanism, it was agreed by the ESWG that the horse industry would continue to rely on the current regulatory mechanisms in place for

horses that move. These regulations that require a brand inspection, a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection, a VS-127 Permit or an International Certificate of Veterinary Inspection prior to movement will serve as the starting point for trace back in the event of a disease outbreak.

Each of the above-mentioned documents is kept and maintained in either the state/country of origin, the state/country of destination or both. Each document contains information as to the horse's point of origin and its point of destination. In the event of a disease concern, federal and state animal health officials are able to access that information. Most importantly, with the exception of the one-time official identification of the horse, these are practices currently being met by horse owners who move their horses and therefore will not require the establishment of new business practices in the industry.

While the recommendations of the ESWG may not initially achieve the ideal goal of the NAIS, which is to capture all movements, a stated goal of NAIS has also been to find a system that will not have a negative impact on current industry practices. The ESWG recommendations to USDA are practical for our industry.