



Rule Change Requested for Re-Entry of Competition Horses

Background

When horses are imported to the U.S. from regions affected with Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM), U.S. Department of Agriculture regulations require them to undergo quarantine and special import tests for CEM, including in some cases test breeding. These requirements also apply to U.S. horses exported to CEM regions for more than 60 days and then returned. For this reason, horses sent to the European Union for competition are always returned to the U.S. within 60 days. U.S. competitors do not want their horses undergoing the various CEM tests.

The current “60 day” rule results in shorter travel intervals for U.S. competition horses, increased expense to owners, and additional training obstacles to ensure the horses are competing at peak levels. Extending the re-entry requirements to “90 days” would reduce the stress on US competition horses, reduce the expense to owners, and provide a more level playing field against our international competitors.

AHC Request to USDA

On January 18, 2012, the AHC requested USDA to extend the re-entry requirements for the importation of U.S. horses that have been temporarily exported to a CEM-affected region from “60 days” to “90 days.” This would allow such horses to be in competition for a longer period and not have to undergo CEM testing and quarantine requirements. The AHC noted that while the horses are competing, they are managed in controlled areas and have little to no contact with other horses except during competition.

The AHC also maintained that implementing these re-entry requirements would mirror our international counterpart’s requirements, like Canada, would place U.S. competition horses on an even footing with their competitors and increase the economic incentive for U.S. owners to compete their horses internationally.

USDA Action

On February 10, 2012 the USDA responded and stated that it was considering the AHC’s request and undertaking steps that could ultimately involve a rule change. The USDA said that the first step was initiating a risk assessment on the potential for a disease outbreak should a change be made lengthening the time permitted outside the U.S. without undergoing CEM testing upon reentry. USDA said based on that assessment and other information it would decide whether to propose a rule change.

AHC's Position

The AHC supports a change to the re-entry requirements for competition horses exported temporarily for up to 90 days to CEM regions and returned.