An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

8th October 2019

To: Equine Industry Stakeholders.

Subject: Vaccination against Equine Arteritis Virus (EAV) and update on the UK outbreaks

Key Message:

- Application figures for the Equine Arteritis Virus (EAV) vaccine indicate suboptimal usage in breeding stallions
- Vaccine is now available for teaser stallions
- It is the responsibility of industry to provide accurate figures to vaccine suppliers as regards the total quantities of vaccine required to ensure a continued supply to the Irish market

To Whom It May Concern,

Equine Arteritis Virus (EAV), the causative agent of the disease Equine Viral Arteritis (EVA), circulates widely on continental Europe. There is an ongoing and persistent risk that it will be introduced into Ireland. For this reason, vaccination of breeding stallions is highly recommended and facilitated under special license from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM). The inactivated vaccine "*EQUIP ARTERVAC*" (manufactured by Zoetis and imported by C&M Vetlink Plc.) is currently licenced on the Irish market. Relevant industry Codes of Practice and manufacturer's guidelines strongly advise that both thoroughbred and non-thoroughbred stallions, including sport-horses, standard-breds and ponies receive a primary vaccination course and a booster every six months[i].

Earlier in 2019, due to restricted availability, vaccine was reserved for breeding stallions and was not being released for teasers. Due to recent increased availability, it is now available for teasers on application.

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Veterinary Medicines Section, Backweston, Celbridge, Co Kildare, W23 X3PH
veterinary.medicines@agriculture.gov.ie
www.agriculture.gov.ie

Situation with EAV in Ireland and the UK

The last confirmed case of EAV infection in Ireland was in 2010. During April and May this year, UK authorities reported four cases of EAV infection in non-thoroughbred stallions. These cases occurred on closely linked premises in Dorset and Devon. In July, a further unrelated outbreak of the disease was confirmed in a fifth non-thoroughbred stallion in Shropshire, who was subsequently castrated. Based on the information available to the UK authorities, none of the affected stallions had been vaccinated against EAV.

EAV vaccine usage – Ireland

DAFM figures for 2019 to date indicate that there is **suboptimal** usage of the EAV vaccine in the Irish thoroughbred stallion population. Additionally, **no** vaccine applications have been received for any Irish non-thoroughbred stallions. This suggests that industry guidelines **are widely not being adhered to** and that a significant number of stallions are not being vaccinated.

Equine Industry Responsibility

The onus is on the Irish equine industry to protect the horse population, to lead on this matter and to actively engage with its members to ensure the uptake of this vital vaccine. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of industry to provide accurate figures to the manufacturers of this vaccine on the ongoing requirements for the Irish market.

Vaccines Supply

Although there have been issues with vaccine supply in recent years, a significant stock of *"EQUIP ARTERVAC"* is currently available. Please be aware that the EAV vaccine is produced by the manufacturers in very limited quantities as overall EU requirements are low. It is essential that industry provides accurate information regarding the numbers that will be required for the Irish market so that manufacturers can continue to match that requirement. The manufacturers have indicated that there is little margin

for error without wastage of this short shelf-life product. In March 2019, 400 doses of the vaccine were imported in March. However due to the relatively low uptake to date, there is a risk that this stock will not be used before it reaches its expiry date on 3rd December 2019. This will result in a financial loss being incurred by the importing company, which is likely to affect future supply to the Irish market.

Conclusion

1. The Irish equine industry is requested to **promote** the uptake of the EAV vaccine and to ascertain accurate figures for the forthcoming 2020 breeding season.

2. It is the responsibility of the Irish equine industry to correspond **directly with the manufacturers** to ensure vaccine supply continues.

3. Vaccine application details, guide to completion and forms for the testing of equine samples within DAFM are attached and also available at the following link: https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/virology/submissions/equinediseases/

Peter Collins
Assistant Principal Officer
veterinary.medicines@agriculture.gov.ie

[i] ITBA Codes of Practice:
https://www.itba.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Codes-of-Practice-2019.pdf
Horse Sport Ireland Voluntary Code:
https://www.horsesportireland.ie/breeding/voluntary-code-for-stallion-and-mare-owners/