

Due to the reported finding of one horse infected with vesicular stomatitis (VS) in New Mexico, US, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has asked the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to suspend the issuance or endorsement of export certificates for horses and other equines originating from the state of New Mexico. These restrictions will be enforced in combination with the current restriction imposed on horses from Texas, US, due to an outbreak of VS in that state as well.

The imposed restrictions on the import of equidae into Canada from New Mexico is effective immediately. The CFIA has confirmed that the import restriction only applies to live horse, donkey or mule imports and not to equine semen or equine embryo imports.

The USDA has also been asked to provide supplementary certification for horses and other equines from other states as follows: "During the previous twenty-one (21) days, the animal(s) in this shipment has/have not been in the State of New Mexico."

The Canadian Border Services Agency will ask all equine transporters crossing the border into Canada the following questions:

1. Do the horses originate from the state of New Mexico or have they been in that state within the past 21 days?
2. Have the horses transited the state of New Mexico en route to Canada?

If the horses originate or have been in the state of New Mexico within the past 21 days, **or have transited through that state**, they will be referred to the CFIA.

CFIA will determine, based on document verification and inspection, whether the horses should be allowed to enter Canada.

It is strongly recommended that horse owners refrain from travelling to or transiting through New Mexico with their horses. It is important to note for horse owners who still want to export their horses to New Mexico that they CANNOT bring them back to Canada on the original Canadian export certificate. Instead, it will be necessary that they move their horses to a non-affected state to establish residency in that state for at least 21 days prior to export to Canada. This means that the horses will be returning to Canada on a U.S. health certificate that includes the statement for non residency in New Mexico during the last 21 days prior to export to Canada.

Current import requirements for equidae entering Canada may be found using the CFIA Automated Import Reference System (AIRS) at <http://airs-sari.inspection.gc.ca> . To determine specific import requirements for each horse, specific parameters that refer to each horse's circumstances will need to be entered and customized import requirements will be provided.

Vesicular stomatitis is a disease that primarily affects cattle, horses and swine, and occasionally sheep and goats. Humans can be exposed to the virus when handling affected animals but rarely become infected. Vesicular stomatitis causes blister-like lesions in the mouth and on the dental pad, tongue, lips, nostrils, hooves, and teats. These blisters swell and break, leaving raw tissue that is so painful that infected animals show signs of lameness and generally refuse to eat and drink which results in severe weight loss. There is risk of secondary infection of the open wounds. Animals usually recover within 2 weeks. While vesicular stomatitis can cause economic losses to livestock producers, it is a particularly important disease because its outward signs are similar to—although generally less severe than—those of foot-and-mouth disease, which horses are not susceptible to. The only way to distinguish among these diseases in livestock other than horses is through laboratory tests.

The mechanisms by which vesicular stomatitis spreads are not fully known; insect vectors, mechanical transmission, and movement of animals are probably responsible. Once introduced into a herd, the disease apparently moves from animal to animal by contact or exposure to saliva or fluid from ruptured lesions. Historically, outbreaks of vesicular stomatitis have occurred in southwestern United States during warm months and particularly along river ways. However, outbreaks are sporadic and unpredictable. (*Source: USDA*)