

**REPORT ON THE EPIDEMIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF OUTBREAKS OF  
VENEZUELAN EQUINE ENCEPHALITIS (ENZOOTIC IE STRAIN)**

Communication from Mexico

The following communication, received on 18 October 2011, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Mexico.

1. Following two outbreaks of Venezuelan Equine Encephalitis (enzootic IE strain) last July and September in the states of Tabasco and Veracruz, the National Agriculture and Food Health, Safety and Quality Service (SENASICA) carried out an epidemiological analysis in order to provide further details on the outbreaks and on the closure of these cases to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). The analysis revealed the following:

2. According to the epidemiological investigations conducted to date, there is no epidemiological relationship between the two cases, nor have there been any further cases.

3. Mexico has been free from Venezuelan Equine Encephalitis (VEE) caused by epizootic strains since 1972. SENASICA has maintained its passive epidemiological surveillance through the notification of suspect neurological cases in which antibodies against the virus can be detected in percentages that are insignificant from a statistical and epidemiological point of view, but the virus has not been isolated in the population at risk.

4. In the recently notified outbreaks, the enzootic virus was isolated, but its dissemination capacity within the sample population of horses or in the surrounding areas could not be established. This means that we can assume that although the enzootic variant of the virus could affect an equid, owing to its low virulence and pathogenicity it would not multiply or be transmitted through the infected equid to the rest of the exposed population. Consequently, the outbreak is basically self-limiting in the infected equids. Moreover, the preventive use of vaccinations against both enzootic and epizootic viruses means that the serological diagnosis is not conclusive, so that the isolation and genetic characterization of the virus is what counts.

5. In the two VEE cases identified in July 2011 (Tabasco and Veracruz), Mexico concluded that the histopathological results and the lesions observed corresponded to discrete localized leukoencephalomalacia with gliosis and moderate multifocal haemorrhaging, and no lesions were observed that would suggest a viral process. At the same time, the viral isolation for VEE was negative.

6. It should be stressed that Mexico maintains continuous passive epidemiological surveillance, with daily work plans involving visits to contact points in the livestock sector to encourage reporting, for the purposes of early detection of any health problems that pose a risk for production, productivity

and public health. At the same time, Mexico maintains a vector control programme in places where Dengue has previously been present, including the states of Tabasco and Veracruz. This control programme is intensified during the rainy season, which is when Culicoides are most common in sub-tropical and tropical areas, which contributes indirectly to reducing the risk of VEE.

7. In view of the above considerations and in order to speed up the return or exportation of equids participating in the XVI Pan American games to be held in Guadalajara, Jalisco, from 14 to 30 October 2011, Mexico proposes that Members:

- Maintain the recognition of Mexico as free from epizootic Venezuelan equine encephalomyelitis; or
- recognize the closure of VEE cases in accordance with the decisions notified to the OIE on 29 August and 13 September 2011; or
- accept the regional nature of the outbreaks, recognizing the state of Jalisco as free from the disease.

8. This communication is being made for reasons of transparency under Article 7 of the Agreement, and is without prejudice to Mexico's rights under that Agreement.

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