International acknowledgement of the Equine Herpes Virus research conducted in South Africa

It was interesting to note in the latest Equine Veterinary Journal that extensive reference is made in a paper by a United Kingdom research team to the paper by Martin Schulman, Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Pretoria, published in the same journal, and edited for the July 2014 ERC Newsletter.

The UK paper is titled, “Equine herpesvirus-1: Dealing practically but effectively with an ever present threat”. This is what they said about the SA paper:

“In this edition of EVJ Schulman and colleagues (2015) illustrate 2 presentations of EHV-1 abortion outbreaks on separate Thoroughbred breeding farms in South Africa, although in both outbreaks described, recrudescence of EHV-1 from the latent state seems to have been the most likely trigger. ... As reported by Schulman et al, even if adequate quarantine protocols exist for new entries to a resident population, risks remain relatively high when introducing mares in late gestation because of the risks from reactivation of latent EHV-1 even in an otherwise healthy animal. In mares in late pregnancy, transport, relocation, social group change and other forms of stress may increase the risk of latently infected horses starting nasal shedding of EHV-1 as well as the virus once of EHV-1 from the latent state seems to have been the most likely trigger. ... As reported by Schulman et al, even if adequate quarantine protocols exist for new entries to a resident population, risks remain relatively high when introducing mares in late gestation because of the risks from reactivation of latent EHV-1 even in an otherwise healthy animal. In mares in late pregnancy, transport, relocation, social group change and other forms of stress may increase the risk of latently infected horses starting nasal shedding of EHV-1 as well as the virus crossing the placenta in the pregnant uterus, resulting in foetal infection and abortion. As recommended in the HBLB Codes of Practice and by Schulman et al, pregnant mares with similar foaling dates should be maintained in small groups from as early in their pregnancies as possible without transportation and re-mixing until they have successfully foaled. Pregnant mares, that arrive following transportation and social disruption, such as those bought from sales or attending veterinary clinics, should always be considered as being ‘high risk’ for EHV abortion and should be managed accordingly with particular due diligence to the potential risk they pose.

Aborted foetuses, placental membranes and/or dead new born foals should be immediately but hygienically removed from the ground and placed in a double wrapped strong leak proof bag or container and sent as soon as is practical to a suitably experienced laboratory for detailed investigation of the cause of abortion and, in particular, to determine whether EHV infection was involved. If EHV is confirmed, procedures outlines in the HBLB Codes of Practice should then continue to be implemented.”

Publication : Equine Veterinary Journal ISSN 0425-1644

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