

12 equine deaths at Cape probably not due to AHS

PROF Alan Guthrie of the Equine Research Centre at the Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Pretoria was relatively soothing yesterday about the outbreak of Equine Encephalosis Virus in the Western Cape that has already resulted in the cancellation of two race meetings at Kenilworth.

The meetings were abandoned due to a State Veteri-

nary quarantine and the racing industry will only be informed today about whether racing will be allowed to proceed at Kenilworth this Saturday.

However, Guthrie said yesterday that there was no conclusive data to indicate that African horse sickness was the cause of the 12 equine deaths since 16 March.

"The four initial cases were around the Simondium

area, within a stone's throw of each other, between 16 and 28 March and on screening, two tested positive for African horse sickness (AHS), which is why this is being treated as an outbreak of AHS and authorities are treading cautiously," said Guthrie.

At Easter another three horses died at a private training establishment in Windmeul, some 24km from Cape

International Airport, and a further three died near Philadelphia, north of Cape Town. Since then, another two have died.

"It was the rapid spread from a localised area to Agter Paarl and Philadelphia and, although the samples from Easter are still being processed, the picture is looking exactly the same, indicating that we are dealing with EEV,

a disease we are not obliged to report to the international community," said Guthrie. "It is possible that this outbreak is not confined to the Western Cape, but because that is a AHS control area, we have more information about the outbreak there."

He was unsure why some of the horses tested positive for the AHS virus, but said they had all been inoculated.

