



SOUTH AFRICAN HORSE EXPORT STRATEGY JUNE 2014



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and

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South African Horse Export Strategy

Introduction

African horse sickness (AHS) is a vector-borne, severe viral infection of horses, resulting in death in a high percentage of cases. AHS is seasonally endemic in South Africa (SA) and resulted in a ban on exports of live horses to uninfected countries for many years. In 1997 an AHS Controlled Area, including a small Free Zone, was established in Western Cape Province, around Cape Town. This enabled exports directly to the European Union (EU), Hong Kong and Singapore from the Kenilworth Quarantine Station in the Free Zone, subject to vector protection and quarantine requirements.

However, this trade has been disrupted numerous times due to outbreaks of AHS in the Controlled Area (although never in the Free Zone) and failure to adequately meet expectations of the EU for surveillance and other control measures. As a result, exports have been possible for less than 50% of the time in the 17 years since 1997. Both the EU and the OIE (the World Organisation for Animal Health) have rejected proposals for re-instatement of Free Zone status in recent years. Further, given current outbreaks in the AHS Controlled Area, granting of Free Zone status under OIE guidelines is likely to take a minimum of 2-3 years (2 years without outbreaks, followed by submission and consideration of a Dossier), assuming no further outbreaks in the interim.

Trade to the EU (and thence to other countries) is currently possible via Mauritius. However this requires a 90-day residence in Mauritius, during which horses lose physical and mental fitness and suffer potentially career-threatening injuries on arrival in Europe and resumption of training.

Despite these issues, there is significant interest within the South African equine industries in re-instating trade directly to the EU and other AHS-Free countries, with manageable quarantine requirements, to allow SA horses to compete fairly on the world stage and eventually (if feasible) to allow SA to host major international equine competitions.

This strategy was developed to provide a staged plan for achieving these outcomes in an open and transparent manner and in a way that is sustainable and will suffer from minimal disruptions to trade in the future.

Goal

The primary goal of this strategy is to re-instate safe export of horses from South Africa to AHS Free countries:

- on a long-term basis,
- with quarantine requirements consistent with animal welfare and safe exports and
- in a manner that ensures minimal disruption to future trade and in the long term allows for short-term movements of horses into and back out of South Africa, such as for hosting of international equine competitions or for shuttle stallions.

Principles

The strategy is guided by the following principles:

1. Any exports must be extremely low to negligible risk – AHS occurrence in an AHS-free country associated with imports from South Africa would have catastrophic effects not just for the importing country, but also for the reputation of the South African horse industry.
2. The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) must be involved and support the strategy from inception – DAFF is responsible for negotiation of international trade protocols and for certification of exports and so without DAFF support any strategy is doomed to failure.
3. Selected potential international trading partners should be briefed on the proposed strategy and negotiations initiated early in the process– for trading partners to agree to any proposed export strategy they need to understand the concept and detail and have the opportunity to satisfy themselves from an early stage that the strategy is appropriate and will meet their Appropriate Level of Protection (ALOP).
4. Any strategy must be logistically feasible and cost-effective – investment must be commensurate with business risk and it is inappropriate to spend large amounts of money on a highly technical bio-secure facility without reasonable certainty that trading partners will be prepared to accept horses from it.
5. A staged approach is appropriate – start small and aim for small shipments for a comparatively modest capital outlay initially, for proof-of-concept, before proceeding to greater investment to support an increasing volume of trade.
6. Quarantine requirements and facilities must be sufficient to satisfy animal welfare concerns and to allow export of performance horses without significant loss of physical and mental fitness, so that they are able to compete effectively within a reasonable time after export.

Options

The following options were identified and considered as part of developing the proposed export strategy.

Export from low-risk Infected Zone

(African horse sickness Controlled Area in the Western Cape Province of South Africa)

The current AHS Controlled Area in the Western Cape has existing infrastructure and risk-mitigation measures in place that make this location suitable for exports from an Infected Zone. Although all of the measures are still in place, the AHS Controlled Area is currently an Infected Zone. This situation is unlikely to change for at least two years after the current outbreak around Porterville and Wellington is resolved. However, in the meantime, this provides an opportunity for low risk exports from an Infected Zone, supported by a fully

vector protected facility at Kenilworth with additional risk mitigation provided by other measures including community awareness, movement controls, horse census and ongoing surveillance.

Advantages

- existing facilities in place at Kenilworth (would require an upgrade to provide full vector protection for the full duration of quarantine and loading)
- additional risk mitigation measures already in place and accepted by the community
- potentially short quarantine period (14-21 days) with use of RT-PCR
- very low incidence of AHS in the AHS Controlled Area and contingency plans in place to respond and contain incursions
- close to Cape Town International Airport for scheduled and/or charter freight flights
- able to proceed relatively quickly (6-12 months) compared to Free Zone (2-3 years)
- implement progressively through initial upgrade to Kenilworth and subsequent purpose-built facility once proof-of concept achieved
- likely fewer disruptions than in endemically infected area such as Johannesburg
- may be possible to upgrade to Free Zone relatively easily in the future if technically feasible

Disadvantages

- requires ongoing maintenance of AHS Controlled Area and additional risk mitigation measures, including response to incursions
- requires negotiations with trading partners to find a country able and prepared to accept the proposed plan
- may still be disruptions when an incursion into the Controlled Area occurs but should be considerably shorter than for Free Zone and less severe than in the endemic area
- fewer scheduled freight services to/from Cape Town than to/from Johannesburg

Export to/via Mauritius

Exports to or via Mauritius are currently possible under a Mauritian protocol. Horses for onward export to the European Union (EU) are required to complete a 90-day residency in Mauritius, including 40 days in pre-export quarantine before departure for the EU.

Advantages

- Existing protocol in place
- Able to export directly and permanent exports to Mauritius is an important trade for the equine industry both in South Africa and in Mauritius
- Ability to send horses on to Europe and then other destinations
- Direct flights available

Disadvantages

- Protocol for onward movement is reliant on a third country.
- Horses lose physical and mental fitness due to the residency and quarantine requirements for onward export to the EU, so that they take a long time to regain

fitness and on return to full training, horses may breakdown, often with career-ending injuries.

- Additional residency requirements in the EU are imposed by other countries (UAE, Singapore, Hong Kong, etc) before onward export to those destinations. The export process extends for 5- 6 months.

Export to/via USA

Exports to or via the USA are currently possible under existing USA requirements, with minimal requirement for pre-export quarantine in SA. However a 60-day post-arrival quarantine in the USA (New York) and the lack of direct flights from SA to New York have made this option unattractive and no horses have been exported via this route since 1999. The USA is unlikely to reduce their quarantine period in the short term under current Federal regulations, although it may be possible to negotiate for the inclusion of limited exercise facilities in the quarantine facility.

Advantages

- Existing protocol in place
- No specific pre-export AHS requirements

Disadvantages

- 60-day post arrival quarantine currently with no exercise facilities
- Expensive (transport plus quarantine cost)
- No direct freight flights from SA to New York
- Post arrival CEM quarantine from all countries that are not recognised as free of CEM

Export from re-instated (Western Cape) Free Zone

Exports through Kenilworth Quarantine Station in Western Cape have occurred sporadically since zone freedom was recognised by the EU in 1997. However, exports are suspended for a minimum of 2 years whenever a new outbreak occurs in the Surveillance Zone. Re-establishment of the Free Zone may be feasible, but would require at least 2 years with no further outbreaks, following resolution of the current Porterville/Wellington outbreak.

Advantages

- established pathway and protocols used in the past
- quarantine restrictions allow exercise under controlled conditions
- quarantine facility already in place
- infrastructure and airport with suitable flight logistics in place
- a stable Free Zone would allow for imports of horses for international competitions

Disadvantages

- minimum of 2 years before Free Zone application can be submitted
- history of incursions in Surveillance Zone suggests “Free” status is likely to be subject to periodic suspensions

- ongoing movement controls, surveillance and information management required and need to be improved to meet OIE and EU standards
- EU regulations undergoing revision and EU protocol may need to be re-negotiated

Export from additional/alternative Free Zone

A possible addition/alternative to re-establishing the previous Free Zone in the Western Cape is to set up a completely new Free Zone in the Northern Cape, perhaps around Springbok. This would allow for resumption of exports from a (new) Free Zone according to OIE requirements.

Advantages

- low equid and vector populations (under investigation) and historically few if any cases of AHS
- low equid population and few movements may be feasible to maintain Free Zone without disruptions and incursions experienced in Western Cape
- low equid population should facilitate surveillance and movement control to be able to comply with OIE Free Zone requirements
- in theory according to OIE Free Zone Requirements, would not need a vector-protected quarantine facility if the area is truly free of AHS (Would be subject to individual country requirements.)

Disadvantages

- would need substantial infrastructure development to be feasible
- would need to establish surveillance and movement controls
- donkey population requiring regular surveillance
- lack of experienced staff, community awareness and support
- significant lead time required to undertake feasibility studies and required development
- no regular scheduled flights so would require specific charter flights
- airport will need to be upgraded
- there is currently no customs service at Springbok airport, so would either need to be established at Springbok or flights diverted via Johannesburg to clear customs

Export from current Infected Zone (Johannesburg)

According to the OIE *Code*, exports from an infected country can be accepted provided they are through a “vector-protected” quarantine facility, including vector protection through all stages of quarantine, loading and transport. However, the *Code* cannot specify what additional requirements a risk-averse country may require. Theoretically, therefore exports from a vector-protected facility in Johannesburg (or elsewhere in the infected zone) directly to Free countries should be possible. However, the reality is that OIE recognised Free countries are likely to require significant additional risk mitigation before accepting such exports.

Advantages

- convenience to Johannesburg International Airport for scheduled freight services

- potentially reduced requirement for surveillance and movement controls (assuming trading partners agree)
- less pressure on State Veterinary services (assuming reduced surveillance and movement controls)
- potentially short quarantine period (14-21 days) with use of RT -PCR

Disadvantages

- significant capital outlay for new facility with no surety of acceptance
- no surveillance or other risk mitigation measures in place
- likely to be difficult to find a trading partner to accept without additional risk mitigation in place
- significant pressure on vector protection in an endemic area increases risk
- dependent on individual country requirements, trade likely to be regularly disrupted whenever AHS cases occur in proximity to the quarantine facility, until satisfactorily resolved/controlled

Knowledge gaps and research priorities

The following knowledge gaps and research priorities were identified and will be pursued as part of this strategy (approximate timeframes for completion are shown in parentheses):

- Diagnostics:
 - OIE recognition of one or more RT- PCR tests for AHS as fit for purpose to confirm negative/prescribed test for international trade (6 months)
 - DAFF approval of serotype specific RT-PCR (9 months)
 - Differentiation of vaccine and wild strains of virus and interpretation of RT-PCR tests in a vaccinated population (2 years)
 - Distribution/ecology of serotypes in SA (2 years)
 - Improved serology for an assay with continuous outcome, suitable for demonstrating a rising titre (lower priority, time frame not determined)
 - DIVA (Differentiating Infected from Vaccinated Animals) serology (dependent on development of a suitable vaccine)
- Vaccination:
 - Transmission studies of vaccine virus (started – 2 years)
 - Inactivated and/or recombinant vaccine for commercial use (5-10+ years)
- Wildlife surveillance
 - using vectors – PCR for host & midge species and virus (requires validation)
 - Dart biopsies & PCR (requires validation)
- Vector ecology
 - Understanding vector ecology and behaviour (not determined)
 - Effects of climate change on vector distribution, abundance and seasonality (not determined)

OIE inclusion of RT-PCR assays in the Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines as fit for purpose to declare negative (i.e. as a prescribed test for international trade); DAFF approval of a serotype specific RT-PCR; RT-PCR assays to differentiate vaccine and field strains of AHS virus and the development of an improved vaccine, preferably with DIVA capability, are considered high priorities.

Risk Management

A number of significant risks to the success of the proposed strategy are identified and planned risk management/prevention measures discussed below.

Failure to implement the strategy

The proposed strategy requires significant funding and support from the equine industries of SA. At the same time it also requires improved organisation and functional powers within DAFF and high level government support for international negotiations with potential trading partners. Without some process to co-ordinate the various stakeholders and ensure implementation, the strategy will fail. This is achieved by the proposed formation of a high-level government and industry representative body charged with implementing the strategy.

Failure of potential trading partners to accept imports

The OIE provides guidelines for horse movements between countries and if a (Free) country can demonstrate on a scientific basis that these guidelines do not meet their Adequate Level of Protection they are able to impose a higher level of risk reduction or to prohibit the trade altogether. Target countries will be reluctant to put high-value domestic horse industries at risk unless they are confident that the risk to their industry is negligible and that the benefits are worth it.

To manage the risk of potential partner countries refusing to accept imports the following steps are included in the strategy:

- Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), as the Competent Veterinary Authority for SA will be included in discussions and planning from the beginning
- Negotiations with a small number potential partner countries will commence as early as possible and they will be fully briefed on all aspects of the proposal and kept up-to-date during implementation. Numbers of partner countries will be increased progressively as success is demonstrated with pilot shipments
- a risk analysis for the proposed approach will be undertaken and presented to trade partners for their assessment and they will be invited to undertake their own investigation and analysis if desired
- proposed trade will start with small pilot shipments during the low-risk period to gain confidence in the protocol and allow proof of concept before progressing to larger and more frequent shipments

Occurrence of an AHS outbreak in another country

An outbreak of AHS in another country associated with horses imported from SA would be devastating for the reputation of the SA horse industries and would seriously disrupt attempts to establish trade with Free countries. This potential risk is addressed by strategies to evaluate the risk of exporting AHS and to ensure export of horses is done in accordance with OIE guidelines. The Department of Trade and Industry in South Africa will be approached to support this, based on the effect of reputational risk on future trade.

Failure of re-establishment of Western Cape Free Zone

Given the relative frequency of outbreaks in the current AHS Controlled Area, the re-establishment of a Free Zone in the Western Cape is problematic and can only be considered subject to feasibility in 2-3 years' time. Assuming that exports via an upgraded Kenilworth facility (or a new purpose-built facility) are successful, the main impact of the failure of the Free Zone will be to seriously reduce the likelihood of (or prevent) future hosting of international equine competitions in SA. In the absence of an internationally/OIE recognised Free Zone it is unlikely that SA will be able to attract support for hosting of such events.

Strategies to manage this risk include:

- maintenance and improvement of horse census, movement controls and surveillance systems and the establishment of an Equine Epidemiology Unit and information systems
- ongoing research into better diagnostics and vaccines
- research into vector and serotype distribution and ecology to determine feasibility of hosting events during a seasonally low-risk period
- investigating an alternative Free Zone option in the Northern Cape.

Failure of supporting risk mitigation strategies

A key component of the strategy is that exports via a vector-protected facility will be supported by surveillance, movement controls and other risk-mitigation measures. It is unlikely potential partner countries will accept imports from SA if these measures are not in place and shown to be working effectively. This risk is addressed by the establishment of a dedicated Equine Epidemiology Unit and supporting information system. This unit will have responsibility for implementing these systems and for analysis and reporting of progress on a regular basis. An important component will be adequate funding, oversight of this unit to ensure they are meeting targets and regular review of progress to address constraints.

Failure of vector protection facilities

A critical factor in the success of exporting through a vector-protected facility is the integrity of the facility itself. It is essential that all aspects of the vector-protection are monitored and audited on a continuous basis, including not only that it is meeting technical/engineering specifications, but also that it is keeping vectors out during normal operations. Contingency plans will need to be developed to deal with failure of vector protection should this happen.

Strategy

| Goal | Strategies | Activities | Time frame | Outcomes |
|---|--|--|------------|---|
| Co-ordinate government agencies (from relevant departments) and industry bodies to implement this strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form a high-level representative body from government and industry charged with this task Form a technical task team charged with this task | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and invite representatives from key bodies to participate Government agencies should include DAFF, DTI, DST, DSR hold an initial meeting to confirm membership and Terms of Reference of both bodies progress implementation of the strategy | 3-6 months | Implementation Groups formed |
| | | | Ongoing | Strategy being implemented |
| Improved information management and reporting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a new structure and system for information management, analysis and reporting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an Equine Epidemiology Unit with responsibility for data management and implementation of horse census, surveillance and movement control Develop an information management project and database system include IT & mHealth systems to take advantage of new technologies for data entry and management any system should be suitable for extension to disease reporting and surveillance/control activities for other industries, not just for horses | 6 months | EEU established |
| | | | 12 months | Improved data management and reporting |
| | | | 12 months | Simplify and automate many functions, in particular related to horse census and movement controls |
| Export from Kenilworth as a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade Kenilworth facility to 24/7 “vector- | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate logistics and develop SOP for short-term quarantine | 6 months | Upgrade of existing Kenilworth facility to full |

| Goal | Strategies | Activities | Time frame | Outcomes |
|--|---|---|---------------------------------|---|
| vector-protected facility in an infected zone | protected” positive pressure facility to meet OIE code requirements for vector protected quarantine and loading | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate feasibility and cost of vector-protected “ loading dome” as addition to current facility Investigate logistics and feasibility of vector protected transport vehicles from the facility to the airport Investigate feasibility and cost of temporary vector-protected “ loading dome” at the Cape Town International Airport Implement required changes to make Kenilworth an acceptable vector-protected facility for trade from an infected zone | | vector-protection from entry to loading onto a plane |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue surveillance, movement controls and horse census as additional risk-mitigation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise/confirm surveillance plan Implement surveillance plan Continue and enhance horse identification and census continue movement controls continue containment and eradication of incursions | ongoing | Additional risk mitigation measures in place to provide assurance of low-risk of imports for trading partners |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk analysis for exports from Kenilworth to demonstrate low risk of exports | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> undertake a risk analysis of the upgraded facilities and additional risk mitigation measures for presentation to trading partners | 6-12 months | Risk analysis report |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate negotiations with key trading partners for trial shipments as proof of concept | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify 2-3 key trading partners who might be interested in accepting horses under a revised protocol (informally) | <p>3 months</p> <p>6 months</p> | Interested partners identified and informal discussions commenced Protocols developed |

| Goal | Strategies | Activities | Time frame | Outcomes |
|---|--|---|------------------------------|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a proposed protocol for shipments from Kenilworth (acceptable to proposed partners) Through DAFF, initiate negotiations with potential partner countries for pilot shipments from Kenilworth | 6-12 months | Partner country(s) agree on a protocol for pilot shipments |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send Pilot shipments to a Free Country | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement pilot shipments with selected trading partners during low-risk period from Kenilworth | 15-18 months | Pilot shipments sent |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send regular shipments to agreeing partner countries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend pilot shipments to regular shipments | 2-3 years | Shipments sent on a regular/routine basis |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research to overcome identified knowledge gaps and constraints | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a program of research as described under <i>Knowledge gaps and Research Priorities</i> | ongoing | Resolution of critical knowledge gaps and constraints |
| | | | | |
| Facilitation of export via a third country in accordance with the OIE code | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent evaluation of long-term potential for export via a third country including third country government, DAFF and other stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate a high-level evaluation of future potential of exports via a third country Offer technical support if applicable | 6-12 months | Evaluation report |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiate the possible use of an upgraded Kenilworth facility as a test case | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiate pilot exports once Kenilworth upgrade has been completed | 6-12 months | Pilot shipments |
| | | | | |
| Facilitation of export to/via the USA | Independent evaluation of long-term potential for export to/via the USA including third country government, DAFF and other stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate a high-level evaluation of future potential of exports to/via the USA | 3-6 months 3-6 months | Evaluation report |

| Goal | Strategies | Activities | Time frame | Outcomes |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the inclusion of exercise facilities in post arrival quarantine • Evaluate the impact of post arrival CEM requirements • Negotiate with DAFF regarding CEM status of South Africa • Negotiate with third countries regarding residency requirements in the USA and PEQ and testing requirements • Negotiate a pilot export | <p>3-6 months</p> <p>6-12 months</p> <p>3-6 months</p> <p>3-6 months</p> | Pilot export |
| | | | | |
| Re-instate Western Cape Free Zone to OIE standard | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake necessary steps towards re-establishing the Free Zone | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build and prove surveillance capacity • Improve movement control management • Implement integrated information management for horse census, movement controls, surveillance and vaccination • Review feasibility of return to Free Zone • Prepare and submit OIE dossier | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>2-3 years</p> | Free Zone status (subject to meeting OIE guidelines) |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing research on knowledge gaps | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement research program directed at allowing return to Free Zone status | ongoing | Resolved knowledge gaps to facilitate return to Free Zone status |
| | | | | |

| Goal | Strategies | Activities | Time frame | Outcomes |
|--|--|---|-------------|---|
| Establish an additional/ alternative Free Zone in the Northern Cape | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a staged study of the feasibility of establishing a Free Zone in the Northern Cape | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a review of historical information and a snapshot vector assessment of numbers/distribution of vectors in North Cape area (underway) Evaluate current infrastructure and development and logistics required to make Northern Cape a viable additional/alternative to Western Cape Free Zone Undertake a full feasibility study of implementing a Free Zone in the Northern Cape to meet OIE requirements, including equid census, movement controls, surveillance, infrastructure development and logistics | 3 months | Vector assessment report |
| | | | 6-12 months | Evaluation report |
| | | | 1-2 years | Feasibility study report |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement Free Zone requirements (if feasible) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure development Undertake equid census Implement Surveillance plan Implement and maintain movement controls Implement Information management system Prepare & submit OIE dossier | 3-5 years | Free Zone dossier submitted & OIE Free status granted |
| Regular exports to main trading partners and movements of performance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue and expand use of Kenilworth facility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate initial exports as proof of concept Negotiate with additional trading partners to open additional markets | 2-3 years | Regular, small-volume exports occurring from Kenilworth |

| Goal | Strategies | Activities | Time frame | Outcomes |
|--------------------------------|--|---|-------------------|---|
| horses in and out of SA | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase throughput at Kenilworth to accommodate increased demand | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend to a purpose-built larger facility to accommodate increased volume of trade | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake feasibility study for larger dedicated and fully enclosed facility Plan and Construct new facility Commence and expand exports from new facility | 2-5 years | Regular exports occurring from new facility |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hosting shuttle stallions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate feasibility of hosting shuttle stallions in purpose-built facility in Cape Town Implement if feasible | 2-5 years | Shuttle stallions coming to SA annually |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hosting international equestrian competitions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate feasibility of hosting international competitions in Cape Town, including Free Zone requirements, utilising seasonal low-risk periods and movements of horses in and out Implement if feasible | 5-10 years | International competitions occurring |