

2011 Equine Piroplasmosis Testing
Entry onto Kentucky Race Tracks
Texas Origin Horses Entering Kentucky
Updated September 7, 2011
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Beginning January 1, 2011 – The KY State Veterinarians Office directed all horses seeking entrance onto a Kentucky Race Track be accompanied with certification of having tested negative for equine piroplasmosis (both T.equi and B.caballi). This directive was issued in response to an outbreak of piroplasmosis and other evidence discovered identifying piroplasmosis having an alarming prevalence within a defined racing population.

The testing requirements implemented in January were done in an attempt to help us better determine the prevalence of equine piroplasmosis (both T.equi and B.caballi) amongst our racing populations of all breeds. The data generated nationwide has enabled us to conclude the risk of introducing B.caballi to our domestic thoroughbred population is minimal. There have been 9 horses nationwide classified as positive for B.caballi. The subsequent epidemiology investigations concluded these horses were likely infected when imported. These importations occurred prior to the 2005 implementation of testing for B.caballi using the more sensitive cElisa assay utilized today. In addition, our understanding is the investigations failed to identify any evidence of natural lateral transmission of B.caballi having occurred within the United States.

Based on the data now available, Kentucky State Veterinarian Robert Stout has amended the EP Testing Directive issued in December 2010 to reflect:

THOROUGHBRED RACING: Horses entering tracks conducting thoroughbred racing are no longer (with exception of Texas horses) required to be tested for piroplasmosis. We have amended our previous directive by removing the requirement that horses entering tracks conducting thoroughbred racing be tested for Equine Piroplasmosis with the sole exception of those horses originating from Texas. The data supports a conclusion that T.equi associated with the United States' thoroughbred racing population is minimal. Of the 169 horses found to be infected with T.equi – 10 are reported to be thoroughbreds and 132 are reported to be racing quarter horses. Eight of the 10 thoroughbreds were associated with a single racing stable in South Florida. An individual associated with this Florida stable was reportedly linked to a previous outbreak involving unsanctioned QH racing and suspicion of unsanitary practices resulting in iatrogenic transmission. The remaining positive thoroughbreds were in Western states and are also believed to have had an indirect association with unsanctioned QH racing.

QUARTER HORSE RACING: Should QH racing resume in Kentucky during 2012, we will be continuing the requirement that horses (regardless of breed) coming onto a track conducting live quarter horse racing will be required to be tested for piroplasmosis (both T.equi and B.caballi). The data continues to clearly demonstrate an unacceptable prevalence of equine piroplasmosis is associated with racing quarter horses. The available data indicates no fewer than 132 racing quarter horses have been discovered positive. With this data, we consider racing quarter horses continue to pose an identified risk to our domestic equine populations. In addition to these racing quarter horses, another 413 horses associated with an outbreak first identified in south Texas during 2009 have been found positive. These horses were traced from the Texas premises and detected throughout the United States.

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STANDARD BRED RACING: Horses (regardless of breed) entering Kentucky tracks conducting live harness racing will continue through this calendar year to be accompanied by certification of testing negative for piroplasmosis (both *T. equi* and *B. caballi*) during the 12 month period preceding the entry. With limited sampling of this breed and population having occurred, we are currently unable to conclude what, if any, risk piroplasmosis presents to the general standardbred racing population.

TEXAS HORSES: As indicated above, a significant outbreak of this disease was detected affecting hundreds of Texas horses in late 2009, with the investigation continuing through 2010. Though the investigation has since concluded, and the risk of transmission to susceptible horses is being mitigated, the Kentucky Department of Agriculture we will continue for the remainder of this calendar year to require that horses originating from Texas be accompanied with certification of having tested negative for equine piroplasmosis (*T. equi* only) during the 12 month period preceding the animal's entry into Kentucky. We are in the process of evaluating testing and other data provided to us by Texas Animal Health Officials and determining what, if any, testing for piroplasmosis of Texas horses entering KY will be required in 2012. In addition to the EP Testing requirement, horses entering Kentucky from Texas are required to enter with a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection and Kentucky Entry Permit.

We will continue monitoring national testing data and disease prevalence and will reevaluate mitigation strategies as needed.

All of these changes are effective immediately.