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BRONSON ANNOUNCES DETECTION OF HORSE DISEASE

TALLAHASSEE- Florida Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Charles H. Bronson announced today that a Manatee County horse has been diagnosed with Equine Piroplasmiasis (EP) - an animal disease that the U.S. has been considered free of since 1988.

Blood and tissue testing of a seven-year-old gelding that had been euthanized after a three-week illness confirmed the presence of the disease in the animal.

State officials immediately quarantined the premises in which the horse resided, as well as two adjacent properties containing horses pending a determination of their status.

An ongoing investigation is being conducted by the State Veterinarian's Office to determine the source of the disease and whether it has spread beyond the immediate area where the infected animal was housed.

EP

Equine Piroplasmiasis (EP) is a blood-borne parasitic disease primarily transmitted to horses by ticks or contaminated needles. The disease was eradicated from Florida in the 1980's, and the tick species believed to transmit EP in other countries have not been identified in Florida in many years. This disease is not directly contagious from one horse to another but requires direct blood transfer. Human infection with equine piroplasmiasis is extremely rare.

Acutely affected horses can have depression, fever, anemia (decreased red blood cells) jaundiced (yellow) mucous membranes and low

platelet counts. EP can also cause horses to have roughened hair coats, constipation, and colic. In its milder form, the disease causes horses to appear weak and show lack of appetite. Some horses become chronic carriers of the disease.

ADVICE TO VETS AND HORSEOWNERS

Veterinarians, horse owners, and others in the equine industry in Florida are asked to monitor their horses carefully and contact their veterinarian if they suspect this disease. Because it is a disease that the U.S. has been free of for two decades, suspected cases must be reported to the Office of the State Veterinarian by law. With the exception of the quarantined premises, there are no EP movement restrictions on horses within Florida or between Florida and other states. Horses entering Florida from other countries with Equine Piroplasmiasis will continue to be tested prior to and following entry according to the current rule.

WHAT HORSEOWNERS SHOULD DO

- ✓ Monitor your horse for the presence of ticks. Use commercially available topical products labeled for ticks if your horse is in an area where tick infestation is a problem. Most of these products are synthetic pyrethrins. Include an avermectin product in your deworming program to provide systemic treatment for ticks. Ask your veterinarian if you are unsure.
- ✓ If you find large numbers of ticks or suspect piroplasmiasis, please contact your veterinarian.
- ✓ Do not share needles between animals during the administration of any medication or vaccinations. EP and other diseases can be spread by the introduction of blood cells from an infected animal into an uninfected animal during routine administration of injectable medications.
- ✓ Continue your normal equine activities.

Additional updates and information will be posted to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Animal Industry web site at: <http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/ai/>.