

**For discussion
on 8 July 2008**

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

**Inspection and Quarantine Arrangements
for the 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Equestrian Events**

PURPOSE

This paper briefs members on the equine inspection and quarantine arrangements for the 2008 Olympics and Paralympics Equestrian Events (the Equestrian Events).

BACKGROUND

2. The Olympic Equestrian Events will take place in Hong Kong from 9 to 23 August 2008 with the last two days reserved as contingency in case of inclement weather conditions during the competition days. The competition will include individual and team competitions for each of the three disciplines, namely dressage, jumping and eventing. Eventing comprises Dressage, Cross-Country and Jumping. Some 228 horses (including reserved horses) and 200 athletes will participate in the Olympic Equestrian Events.

3. The Paralympic Equestrian Events will take place from 7 to 12 September 2008 with the last day as the contingency day. There will be individual and team competitions for dressage only. Some 78 horses and athletes will take part in the Paralympic Equestrian Events.

4. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) is the veterinary authority for the import and export of animals in Hong Kong. With respect to the Equestrian Events, AFCD is responsible for stipulating the import health requirements with a view to facilitating the import of horses to Hong Kong, and for issuing health

certificates to assist the export of these horses to their next destination after the Equestrian Events.

5. AFCD's responsibilities also include the inspection and quarantine for the import and export of horse feed and bedding materials of plant origin; monitoring the conditions of stables; and providing administrative support to overseas equestrian team veterinarians in the latter's application to the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong for practice approval covering their stay in Hong Kong. Thus far, we have received 100 applications from overseas veterinarians for permits to practise during the Equestrian Events.

QUARANTINE REQUIREMENTS FOR EQUESTRIAN HORSES

6. Since 2005, AFCD has conducted relevant risk assessments and consulted various stakeholders, including Beijing Organising Committee for the Games of XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG), Fédération Équestre Internationale (FEI), World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), veterinary authority of qualifying countries, Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) and others on related quarantine, biosecurity and animal welfare issues. Relevant standards, operating procedures, import/export health protocols and application procedures have subsequently been formulated and agreed upon. As an example, all participating horses will be tested for equine influenza before they are exported to Hong Kong.

7. The quarantine arrangements outlined in paragraphs 8 to 12 below have been agreed with OIE, FEI, BOCOG, the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of the People's Republic of China (AQSIQ) and the Equestrian Committee (Hong Kong) of BOCOG.

(i) Pre- Export Quarantine

8. Before an equestrian horse can be exported to Hong Kong, it has to undergo a seven-day Pre-Export Quarantine (PEQ) in one of the 25 PEQ overseas stables approved by AFCD. These stables are located in

Australia, Europe and North America respectively, and AFCD has conducted inspections on the conditions of these stables before approving them as PEQ stables. Equestrian horses in the PEQ stables will be kept under close surveillance by competent veterinary authorities of the local governments. AFCD will conduct audit checks from time to time.

9. Before leaving the stables after the seven-day PEQ period, each equestrian horse must be examined by an Official Veterinarian of the competent quarantine authority of the country where the PEQ stable is located. The Official Veterinarian has to ensure that all conditions stated in the health certificates for exporting the horses to Hong Kong have been fulfilled. These conditions include vaccination against major infectious diseases and blood tests to ensure the horses do not carry other non-infectious diseases. If clinical signs of infectious diseases are suspected, the horse will have to be isolated and subject to further testing until it meets all conditions stated in the health certificate. If the condition is confirmed to be infectious, it will not be allowed to be exported to Hong Kong.

(ii) *Post-Arrival Isolation*

10. Upon arrival, all equestrian horses must undergo a ten-day Post-Arrival Isolation (PAI) in designated stables in Shatin. Similar to the PEQ, equestrian horses will be under close surveillance during the 10-day PAI period, during which the horses' health conditions will be closely monitored. All equestrian horses will not be permitted to have any contact with local horses during their entire stay in Hong Kong. However, they are allowed to train, exercise and compete during PAI. During this lock-down period, access to stables is strictly controlled and biosecurity measures will apply. Only authorized personnel are allowed entry.

(iii) *Prevention of disease outbreaks*

11. PEQ serves to prevent the import of equestrian horses showing clinical signs of diseases and those with uncertain health status, whereas PAI serves the same purposes as well as provide an opportunity for the equestrian horses to acclimatize to Hong Kong's weather. If

clinical signs of infectious or contagious diseases are detected in any horse during any time of its stay in Hong Kong, the affected horse will be moved to the isolation stables immediately and prompt follow up actions will be taken to prevent further spreading of diseases.

(iv) Export of horses after the Equestrian Events

12. After the Events, the horses will be returned to the places where they are based. They may also be sent to other places for competitions. AFCD has established export protocols with all of the horses' intended destinations. The export protocols are very similar to the import protocols for allowing the importation of horses into Hong Kong and are necessary to ensure that the health status of the returning horses has not changed during its stay in Hong Kong.

ANIMAL WELFARE

13. Hong Kong's hot and humid weather could pose a challenge to equestrian horses, particularly those from cooler temperate regions. This factor has been considered at all stages of planning so as to minimise the impact on horse welfare. All stables and isolation facilities are air-conditioned. Dedicated facilities will be provided for cooling horses at the competition venues. These include cooling stations with iced water for spraying onto the horses and misting tents for supplying chilled mist. Taking into account the professional advice of the veterinary delegates to the Equestrian Events, all competitions are carefully timed to be conducted either in the early morning or evening to avoid the intense heat in the afternoon. A purpose-built veterinary clinic together with a team of experienced event treating veterinarians will be available to provide immediate treatment to horses.

LIAISON WITH STAKEHOLDERS

14. AFCD will be in charge of the quarantine of horses and will work closely with the quarantine management team and clinical veterinary services of the Equestrian Company (EqCo) and HKJC.

Apart from AFCD's in-house veterinary laboratory, we have arranged for diagnostic support from renowned overseas reference veterinary laboratories to provide diagnostic support if necessary. Regular daily meetings with relevant stakeholders such as FEI delegates, EqCo and HKJC will be held during the Equestrian Events to enhance communications and to address any problems in a timely manner.

ADVICE SOUGHT

15. Members are invited to note the contents of the paper.

**Food and Health Bureau
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
July 2008**