

Session 15

Theatre 4

Horse demography and movements within mainland Great Britain (GB)

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Recent outbreaks of diseases such as Equine Infectious Anaemia & Dourine in the EU & the threat of African Horse Sickness, mandate the need for data to improve horse disease preparedness within GB. At a national level, this depends on knowledge of the risk of disease introduction & disease spread (through population demographics & movements). The objective of this study was to obtain data on the geographical distribution & patterns of movements of horses within mainland GB (which are not routinely recorded). These data were obtained from horse owners via an online questionnaire. After exclusions, there were 4481 respondents included in the study. All data obtained were anonymous & summarized at the resolution of postcode area & geographical region within GB. On average, respondents owned 4 horses (range 1-150, median 2). The majority of owners kept horses on their own premises, although owners in London tended to keep their horses between 10-50 miles away. The South West, South East & the Midlands (England) appeared to have higher numbers of horses than other regions. The recorded destination for imports of foreign horses was highest for the South of England & East Anglia. Wales & the South of England reported approximately twice as much international travel as other regions. There were also regional differences in the maximum number of road hours for the purpose of horse care as well as for local & national events. Horse owners were more likely to travel for competition than for leisure activities such as hacking & spent on average, a maximum of 4 nights/year away from the home premise. These data provide valuable insights into previously unknown attributes of the horse population of GB. These data will parameterize mathematical models that will be used to predict the impact of disease incursion into different regions of GB. Acknowledgements: Defra & the Institute for Animal Health for funding this study.