Venezuelan equine encephalitis (VEE) outbreak in Mexico and the Panamerican games
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In 2011 Mexico hosted the Panamerican Games (PG). Export certifications were agreed ahead of time with countries but conditions changed due to two outbreaks of VEE in southeast Mexico. Outbreaks were notified to OIE and several countries implemented restrictions for the movement of horses. Epidemiological reports and follow up of both cases were submitted to OIE, our main commercial partners and to WTO. Both cases were auto-limited I-E enzootic variant. Equine infections with this variant cause low level virulence and antibody response, but most cases show no clinical disease due to low pathogenicity. The epidemiological investigation concluded that mortality recorded was not the consequence of the identified I-E virus. OIE´s recommendations for EEV do not differentiate among enzootic and exotic variants of VEE, nor does the format for declaring disease allow for this differentiation. These issues outlined the need to modernize conditions and logistics for international horse movements, especially regarding sporting events. The open communication with countries allowed the establishment of conditions for movement of horses participating in the PG, 137 horses from 47 different countries participated in the event. The thorough epidemiological investigations supported other schemes for risk mitigation for VEE. The experience gained through this event shaped a new approach for a faster establishment of sanitary requirements. Traditionally import and export requirements are based on country by country negotiation of bilateral certification as well as generic health certification based on presence of disease. In order to facilitate the movement of horses, an overall review of import and export requirements, an evaluation of disease risk and OIE´s recommendations, helped establish a universal certification scheme that gives different options that minimize disease risks but do not unnecessarily restrain movement of horses, among them a regionalized approach to VEE.