

For quite a few years, Maryland has been faced with Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA). This matter was brought to the attention of the horse industry but they expressed little interest in developing a program. After seeing that other states were developing a program that might prevent the movement of Maryland horses interstate, the industry approached us last year and requested our assistance.

Many states moved into a similar program too swiftly and found they had assumed a task much greater than their potention and then had to withdraw and regroup with a less extensive program. We have tried to take advantage of the experience of other states and are moving slowly to develop a workable program. We have regulations to require certain procedures be followed when a positive reactor is found to protect other horses from the infection.

On March 18th a hearing was held on regulations to require all horses entering the State, to have been tested within the last year. (The Racing Commission is requiring a yearly test of track entries). We have the authority, through the last Legislature, to control the public sale of horses in Maryland as soon as we can develop plans. Your signing of House Bill 30 as soon as possible would give us this authority. We are now preparing regulations to require testing all horses in shows. This is a very difficult program to develop and a great deal of emotionalism is involved; it is felt we must move cautiously.

The two bills mentioned earlier require the testing of horses entering Maryland on a 6 months basis. Virginia has a 12 months test as well as Pennsylvania. New Jersey has just moved from a 6 months test to a 12 months requirement. We are attempting to be comparable with surrounding states in our requirements as well as work with the Racing Commission, although I understand the Maryland Standards Breeders' requirements are 6 months.

We are attempting to evaluate very carefully our development of this program. It is possible through regulation to strengthen our requirements and even change the testing period if we find it advisable. However, at this time we would like to develop what we believe to be practical regulations and avoid moving to a 6 months test requirement as mandated by these two bills. I have discussed this matter with the sponsor and explained our position, which I believe he understands, and with the inadequate wording in the bill, perhaps we could delay this legislation to give our program a chance to work.

Sincerely,