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WVA Position Statement on Use of Horses for Production of Biologics and Therapeutics

BACKGROUND

Horses are often used in the production of biologics and therapeutics to treat or prevent various conditions in humans and other animals. They are useful because their large size allows for the collection of significant amounts of blood, serum, or other substances. For example, equine chorionic gonadotropin (eCG, also known as pregnant mare serum gonadotropin or PMSG) is a hormone product derived from the blood of pregnant mares used globally to reverse anestrus, induce puberty, and enhance fertility in dairy and beef cattle, pigs, sheep, and goats.^{1,2} The welfare and oversight of horses used in the production of biologics and therapeutics varies considerably across farms and countries. Ethical and welfare concerns have been expressed about several aspects of the blood and urine sample collection processes. For example, harvesting of blood from pregnant mares sometimes results in the mare being bled too frequently or having too much blood taken at any one time.² How the horses are housed, handled, and transported, and their general care and veterinary attention as well as that of their offspring are also important considerations. Recommended practices for ensuring good welfare of horses used for industrial and medical blood, serum, and urine production are available.¹

WVA POSITION

The welfare of all animals under human care should have the highest priority. For that reason, the WVA calls for updated and transparent management of the overall field, in which ethical and welfare concerns for donor horses and recipient animals are considered, and the welfare of horses involved in the industry is ensured at an adequate level according to published recommendations. The WVA supports the development and use of alternatives, such as bioequivalent synthetic biologics and therapeutics, to replace the need for using horse blood, serum, and urine to derive biologics and therapeutics that treat or prevent various conditions in humans and other animals.

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1. Manteca-Vilanova X, Beaver B, Uldahl M, Turner PV. Recommendations for ensuring good welfare of horses used for industrial blood, serum, or urine production. *Animals* 2021; 11(5):1466, doi:10.3390/ani11051466.
 2. Manteca-Vilanova X, De Briyne N, Beaver B, Turner PV. Horse welfare during equine chorionic gonadotropin (eCG) production. *Animals* 2019; 9(12):1053, doi:10.3390/ani9121053.