

PRESS RELEASE

Maisons-Alfort, 14 June 2021

ANSES appointed international reference laboratory for contagious equine metritis

On 11 June 2021, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) appointed ANSES as its reference laboratory for contagious equine metritis. This disease reduces fertility in mares and has major economic consequences.

Contagious equine metritis is caused by the bacterium *Taylorella equigenitalis*. In 25 to 30% of infected mares it leads to endometritis, an infection of the uterus which prevents them from bearing young. Males are healthy carriers, but can transmit the bacteria during mating or artificial insemination. While the disease can be treated and is not fatal, it can cause major economic losses to stud farms.

Consolidation of its reference role

The ANSES Laboratory for Animal Health, which has been awarded this new mandate, joins the two other reference laboratories for contagious equine metritis already designated by the OIE, in the United States and the United Kingdom. Dr Sandrine Petry, from the Pathophysiology and Epidemiology of Equine Diseases Unit based at the ANSES laboratory's Normandy site, has been appointed as the designated expert. As part of its new missions, the laboratory may be required to analyse samples sent by other countries to confirm suspected cases of contagious equine disease. It also has a role in promoting methods of diagnosing the disease: the bacteriological method, which is the official detection method used internationally, as well as polymerase chain reaction (PCR), which is faster and more sensitive.

This international reference activity adds to the national and European mandates already held by this ANSES laboratory for contagious equine metritis: it has been the national reference laboratory for this disease since 1992 and the European Union reference laboratory for all equine diseases other than African horse sickness since 2008. This is now ANSES's 26th reference mandate for the OIE. It follows the one for another equine disease, dourine, which was awarded to the Agency in June 2020.

Research on the bacterial genome

The laboratory's research work on the genome of *Taylorella equigenitalis* is internationally recognised: the team was the first to sequence the genomes of this bacterium and a related species, *Taylorella asinigenitalis*. It also curates the content of the international multilocus sequence typing (MLST) database, which lists the genotypes of the various *Taylorella equigenitalis* clones identified in the world. The team is in charge of verifying the data sent by users of this database and uploading them once verified. *"There are several strains within this bacterial species. Monitoring their circulation at the global level enables us to more effectively control the disease and determine the situations at risk of exposure"*, explains Sandrine Petry.

Press liaison

+33 (0)1 49 77 13 77 / (0)1 49 77 22 26 / (0)1 49 77 28 20
presse@anses.fr

The French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety (ANSES) provides public decision-makers with the scientific benchmarks needed to protect humans and the environment against health risks. It studies, assesses and monitors all the chemical, microbiological and physical risks to which humans, animals and plants are exposed, thereby helping the public authorities take the necessary measures, including in the event of a health crisis. A national agency working in the public interest, ANSES comes under the responsibility of the French Ministries of Health, the Environment, Agriculture, Labour and Consumer Affairs.