

New AHS test developed in Faculty a boost for South Africa's international horse exports

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Image by Jaco Wiid

[The World Organisation for Animal Health](#) has approved a South African developed diagnostic test for African horse sickness (AHS), a potentially deadly horse disease. Previously, results for the test for this disease took a minimum of two weeks. Thanks to a test developed in South Africa by Professor Alan Guthrie, and colleagues at [the Faculty of Veterinary Science's Equine Research Centre](#) (ERC), University of Pretoria, the test now only takes four hours.

Prof Guthrie, the Director of the ERC explains: "Diagnostic testing for animal diseases is one of the cornerstones of international trade. Because we can now determine the AHS status of a horse in hours, it can reduce the time our horses spend in pre-export quarantine."

181 World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) member countries voted on the adoption of international standards in the field of animal health, especially relating to international trade, at the OIE General Assembly in Paris in May 2017.

The Guthrie RT-PCR Test is now officially validated by the OIE for certification of individual animals prior to movement and has greatly improved the laboratory diagnosis of AHS by increasing the sensitivity of detection and shortening the time required for the diagnosis.

Prof Ian Sanne of the [Wits Health Consortium Equine Health Fund](#) comments, "This is an incredible achievement from a local research facility with minimal financial support. AHS has affected South African horse exports since the 1960s and key stakeholders in the industry have been working to find long term solutions to these challenges. This test will support the safe, direct exports of horses from South Africa."

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