

USDA deports illegal Trakehner horses

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Fifteen Trakehner horses, originally from West Germany, which were brought into the United States illegally last year, have been deported.

A federal district court ordered the horses, all mares, to be deported because the Illinois owner failed to meet U.S. Department of Agriculture regulations to protect the nation's horses against a venereal disease.

"The mares were in violation of our animal import regulations because they were misrepresented when they were imported from Denmark," said John Atwell, deputy administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. "The mares were moved from West Germany to Denmark in August of 1980 and then exported to the United States

as Danish horses in September of 1980."

The United States has banned the import of West German mares since 1978 when contagious equine metritis, a venereal disease of horses, was diagnosed in horses in that country.

Atwell said that APHIS veterinarians confirmed the origin of the horses in the spring of 1981 and ordered the mares out of the country. The owner, Marie Louise Barton, sued to stop this action. The Federal District Court in East St. Louis, Ill., ordered Barton to comply with the USDA regulations, and the horses were deported.

"We viewed deportation as a necessary step in preserving the integrity of our control program," Atwell said. "If the horses were allowed to remain, others would

introduce horses illegally with the expectation that courts would allow them to stay if the horses could be proved free of disease. It is likely diseased horses would be included in such importations."

Contagious equine metritis is a highly contagious bacterial infection that most notably affects mares. It causes uterine infection and failure to conceive. The stallion is a carrier and can be freed of the bacteria by washing an antimicrobial treatment of the external genitalia. Antibiotics can be used to help free mares of the infection, but treatment is not always successful.

USDA restricts the import of breeding age horses from countries where the disease has been found. Geldings and horses under two years of age are not affected by these import restrictions.

Stallions may be imported if they have been treated with an approved medication under foreign government supervision and are found to be free of the infection on three successive tests. They must then pass USDA port-of-entry quarantine to check for other diseases before being consigned to a state that has agreed to carry out further inspections, precautionary treatments and testing under state quarantine.

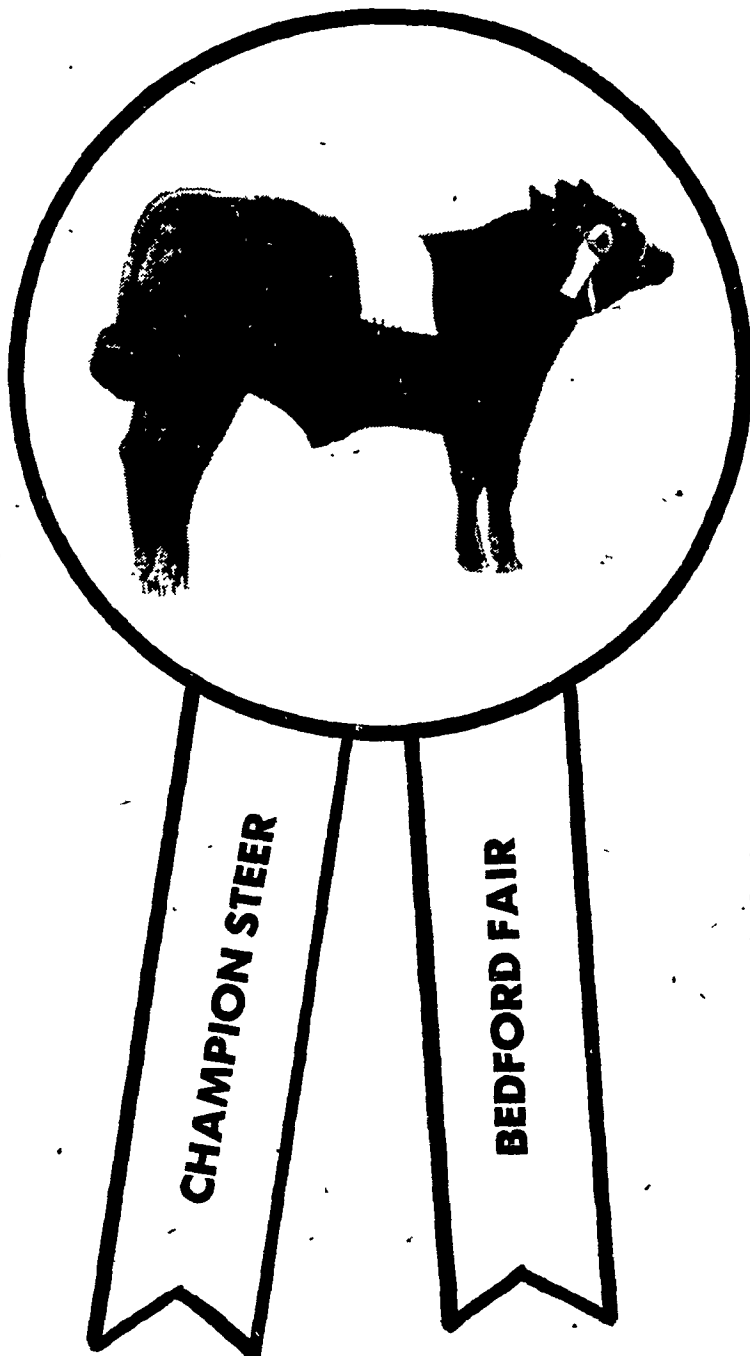
The disease was accidentally introduced into Kentucky in 1978. It

cost the Thoroughbred breeders in that state an estimated \$13.6 million to bring the outbreak under control. The disease was found in Trakehner horse in Missouri in 1979; it cost breeders in that state about \$320,000 to control.

Contagious equine metritis was first reported in the United Kingdom in 1977. Since then, it has been identified as a new disease in nine countries; Austria, Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan and the United States.

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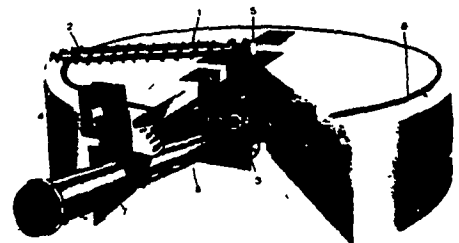


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