

Importation, Storage and Transport of Frozen Semen

Photos: Angela Smith



Above: Victoria Weston with a collection of frozen semen storage tanks at Matamata Vets. premises

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The importation of frozen semen from around the world is becoming common practice for many equine-breeding enthusiasts, who are keen to introduce new bloodlines to New Zealand. Importing semen is a very effective and efficient method, not only to introduce new genetics to a breed or population, but also to accelerate genetic gain.

Import Procedure

New Zealand is one of, if not the strictest country to import semen into. We are a very lucky country in that we are free of so many dis-

eases, and maintaining this biosecurity is paramount. It is for this reason that MAF require semen being

imported to meet a list of strict requirements, including tests for EVA (Equine Viral Arteritis), EIA (Equine Infectious Anaemia), and CEM (Contagious Equine Metritis) among others, with these needing to be taken at certain time periods in relation to when the semen is collected. There are significant costs associated with the collection and freezing of semen and its subsequent export to New Zealand, so it is recommended that the semen's eligibility for export to and entry into New Zealand be investigated thoroughly before purchasing the semen.

Besides all the MAF import requirements and paperwork, it is also important that you make informed decisions regarding what you are purchasing. Ensuring that adequate numbers of sperm per dose are provided and that the post-thaw quality of the frozen



Right: Victoria pours liquid nitrogen into a temporary storage box in preparation for transferring semen to a transport container to be taken to its point of use

semen is of an acceptable standard is paramount to optimizing success after artificial insemination with frozen-thawed semen. It must be noted that the freight of the shipping container is one of the most significant costs associated with the importation of semen to New Zealand, so where possible, like-minded breeders should group together to import as much semen as they can in the one container. It will cost the same to import one dose as it would to import 20 or more doses (except for the GST content where applicable).

Transport of Semen

Frozen semen is transported around the world and domestically most commonly in 'dry shippers'. This is a shipping container that contains no free liquid nitrogen in the container whilst holding the semen at -196°C . This enables frozen semen to be transported without being classed as dangerous goods. Alternatively, 'wet' shippers can be used, which are full of liquid nitrogen and do not have absorbent properties. There are many pro's and con's for both types of containers, and the decision is made which type to use depending on the length of time the semen will be in transit, its destination and the amount of semen being transported. We are happy to advise you on the best option for your situation.

Storage of Frozen Semen

Once semen has arrived at our [Matamata Veterinary Services] MAF approved semen laboratory, it is

transferred to our long-term storage tanks that are methodically/regularly topped up to ensure that they contain adequate levels of liquid nitrogen. Frozen semen will last forever, i.e. it will not deteriorate in quality over time, provided that the storage tanks are not allowed to 'go dry'. As per the MAF requirements, semen is stored according to its country of origin, enabling semen to be re-exported if required. Most equine semen is frozen in 0.5ml straws, and therefore these are stored in groups of 10 in goblets making the transfer of semen, if required, easy.

If you are interested in importing frozen semen then please contact us to discuss your stallion of interest. We are happy to act as importers on your behalf making an often complicated process stress free for you!

Matamata Veterinary Services also provides all equine reproductive services including Artificial Insemination of mares with fresh and frozen semen, stallion collection and freezing from our MAF approved laboratory, and stallion training for semen collection. Please feel free to contact either Dave Hanlon, our reproductive specialist, or myself for further information.

MVS Specialised Equine Reproduction Services
Matamata Veterinary Services

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Services:

- AI – Fresh and frozen semen
- Embryo transfer
- Stallion semen freezing (MAF approved export facility)
- Semen collection for fresh/chilled shipment
- Stallion training for semen collection
- Import/Export of stallion semen

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