

13 July 2011

Current Situation

Staff from the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities and the Department of Primary Industries are managing two Hendra virus incidents on the Mid and North Coast of NSW. They are continuing to work closely with NSW Health and government authorities in Queensland.

Since 29 June 2011 samples have been submitted for Hendra exclusion from an additional 28 NSW properties and all have been tested as negative.

Second horse infected at Wollongbar

The companion horse on the property quarantined in the Wollongbar area was euthanased on 12 July 2011, after laboratory testing at the Australian Animal Health Laboratory confirmed that it was infected with Hendra virus. It was noticed to be off its food on 10 July 2011 and became more depressed, showing signs consistent with Hendra virus infection including: shifting weight, fever, increased heart and respiration rates.

It is believed that this horse became infected with Hendra following very close contact with the original infected horse.

Hendra virus at Macksville

One property near Macksville on the NSW Mid Coast remains in quarantine; restrictions apply to the movement of horses and other items onto and off the property.

The first round of testing on the companion horse has been completed and all results are negative. Samples were collected from the two other 'low risk' horses on the property on 11 July 2011 and the results are pending. All the horses are being regularly monitored and remain well.

Assistance with getting 'high risk' samples to the laboratory

If following examination of a sick horse, the clinical signs and potential exposure to fruit bats suggest that Hendra virus infection is highly likely please contact a government veterinarian to discuss options for getting the samples to the closest suitable laboratory as quickly as possible.

Avoiding needle stick injuries

Veterinarians should adopt protocols to minimise the risk of needle stick injuries when sampling or treating horses, especially those that may have Hendra. Recapping used needles is a high risk practise and should be avoided by carrying portable sharps disposal containers for horse field investigations.

Further information is found in the new AVA [Guidelines for veterinary personal biosecurity](http://www.ava.com.au/biosecurity-guidelines) at: <http://www.ava.com.au/biosecurity-guidelines>.

Macksville information meeting

The NSW Department of Primary Industries and Mid North Coast Local Health District are holding an information night on Hendra virus this Thursday 14 July for local horse owners and interested members of the public. The public meeting will be held at Macksville Ex-Servicemen's Club at 7.30pm.

PPE Training

The NSW Department of Primary Industries is developing a new program of refresher training in the use of PPE, if you are interested in attending a session in your area please contact us at biosecurity@dpi.nsw.gov.au.

Reminder on Hendra sampling protocols

Veterinarians are reminded that the following samples should be submitted from a horse suspected to be infected with Hendra:

- 10 mL of LiHep blood in evacuated tubes for PCR testing and
- 10 mL of clotted blood and
- Swabs from each nasal cavity pooled in PBGS or 2ml of saline if no transport media available.

Note oral or rectal swabs may also be collected.

Fresh submandibular lymph nodes or blood clots may be collected from dead horses.

Sampling media is available from the [the State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory \(SDVL\)](http://www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au) on virology.enquiries@industry.nsw.gov.au, 02 4640 6337 or 02 4640 6377. The media may be stored in the freezer until required. Alternatively if media is required at short notice, please contact your local LHPA.

PPE

Veterinarians are reminded of the importance of appropriate PPE when examining and treating horses. The most recent version of the Guidelines for Veterinarians handling potential Hendra virus infection in horses (Version 4.1) is available at the website www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au. This information was written for Queensland vets but the principles are applicable wherever there is a risk of Hendra virus infection.

Notification of suspect Hendra

Report all suspected cases in horses to the local Livestock Health and Pest Authority, an inspector with the Department of Primary Industries, or the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

General Recommendations to veterinarians

Veterinarians are urged to review their Hendra virus case investigation procedures, infection control protocols and client communication resources.

Veterinarians should develop, train in and implement infection control procedures to manage the risks associated with working with sick horses.

Infection control procedures are the primary defense against horses in the pre-clinical phase where they may excrete Hendra virus but still appear clinically normal.

Where Hendra virus is a differential diagnosis, veterinarians should provide sound advice to horse owners to reduce their potential exposure, until a negative test result is returned.

General advice for horse owners on protecting themselves and their horse from Hendra is available at: <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/horses/health/general/hendra-virus#Information-for-horse-owners>.

Further information

Further information on Hendra including advice on sampling and information for clients may be found at:

- <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/horses/health/general/hendra-virus/vets>
- <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/animal/info-vets> and
- <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/horses/health/general/hendra-virus>

Contact your GP, local Emergency Department or local Public Health Unit if you have concerns about possible exposure of people to a horse with Hendra virus infection. Contact details for NSW Public Health Units are available at: <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/Infectious/phus.asp>

Information on the current situation in Queensland may be found at http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/4790_2900.htm.

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (13 July 2011). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of NSW Department Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.