



AHIC – Message to Industry 12 August 2009

## BIOSECURITY AND QUARANTINE

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The current outbreak of Hendra virus (HeV) on a horse property in QLD emphasises again the critical importance of observation and reporting of clinical disease in horses. Recently, outbreaks of strangles on a number of properties in NSW provide additional proof of the need for all horse owners to institute biosecurity measures on their properties. This includes isolation of all new arrivals for a suitable period to prevent introduction of any disease onto the property.

## HENDRA VIRUS

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Research at the Australian Animal Health Laboratory after the Redlands 2008 outbreak of HeV has provided new information that must be taken into account in areas where flying foxes congregate.

All flying fox populations in Australia have the potential to carry and excrete HeV.

The new information is that horses can be infected with HeV for a couple of days before showing any clinical signs of being ill. During that time they can be excreting HeV which potentially can infect anybody who comes into contact with the infected horse. The research showed that infected horses appear normal, but have increased heart rates and body temperatures before they become ill. Thus, it is essential that horse owners take appropriate steps to prevent access by horses to all areas where flying foxes congregate.

The research has implications for horse owners or managers in other areas of Australia. Horses travel regularly from QLD and northern NSW (where HeV infections have been detected) to all parts of Australia. This means that horses from these areas must be isolated, observed and monitored closely for the first few days after arrival to ensure they remain healthy. If they are ill, then a veterinarian should be called and advised that the horse has recently arrived from an area where it is possible to have come into contact with flying foxes and HeV. This enables the veterinarian and those in contact with the horse to take appropriate precautions to prevent them becoming exposed to HeV when examining the horse and taking samples for laboratory analysis.

## STRANGLES

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NSW DPI has advised of a number of recent outbreaks of strangles on horse properties. Advice from NSW is as follows:

Strangles – take care when introducing new horses to your property

In the last few weeks there have been several cases of strangles on horse properties in NSW have occurred after a new horse arrived on the property.

A horse can appear normal, but be incubating the disease or be a source of infection. Horses can incubate strangles infection for 3 to 8 days before appearing sick. A horse that has had strangles can remain infectious for at least 4 weeks

after they recover; some may remain infectious for up to 8 months. For this reason it is important to keep new horses isolated from other horses on your property for at least 2 weeks and check them daily for signs of ill-health. It is a good idea to ask the person who last cared for the horse whether the horse has been sick in the last few months, or if it has been in contact with sick horses, and get as many details as you can.

If your horse develops a fever, snotty nose or swellings under the jaw consult your veterinarian as soon as possible.

Remember, strangles is a notifiable disease in NSW. Further information on strangles, how to prevent it, and how to report it is available at:

[http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/horses/health/general/strangles\](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/horses/health/general/strangles)



Photo: OLIVER University of Sydney

Strangles is only one of the notifiable diseases of horses in Australia. Horse owners should be aware of those diseases, which can be found on the web sites of the different State Departments.