

HENDRA VIRUS INFORMATION SHEET – PLEASE READ AND FAMILIARISE YOURSELF WITH THE FACTS

Horses with Hendra virus present with vague and varied symptoms (many of which are consistent with less serious conditions), but Hendra virus should always be considered.

SYMPTOMS include some (but not necessarily all) of the following:

- * Rapid onset
- * Elevated rectal temperature – Normal temperature: 37.2 – 38.8degrees C.
- * Increased heart rate – a normal resting horse -38 -40beats per minute (foals 70-100bpm, yearlings 45-60 bpm and 2 year olds 40-50bpm)
- * discomfort/weight shifting between legs
- * Dull/ depressed/ lethargic/ off feed
- * Respiratory signs e.g.
 - increased respiratory rate – normal for resting adult horses 8-12 breaths / minute (newborn foals 60-80 breaths per minute. Older foals 20-40 breaths per minute)
 - respiratory distress
 - clear or frothy nasal discharge
- * Colic
- * Urinary incontinence or straining to urinate
- * Neurological symptoms e.g.
 - wobbly gait
 - affected vision in one or both eyes
 - aimless walking in dazed state
 - head tilting and circling
 - muscle twitching
 - disorientation

****Note disorientation** may result in getting caught in a fence, so a horse could be treated as just a “fence injury” without taking adequate biosecurity precautions!

****Note disorientation** or rising temperature might cause a horse to go into a dam or swamp and get stuck, so may be treated as a “rescue” without adequate biosecurity precautions!

Horses with Hendra are already shedding (passing on) the virus BEFORE showing symptoms. Laboratory testing is the only way to confirm/rule out Hendra virus – this may take 24 – 48 hours (more if over the weekend) during which time the horse(and any others in contact) must be considered as extremely high biosecurity risk i.e. fully quarantined etc. and all people who have had contact also must be identified and considered at risk.

By the time that a horse at an event is suspected of having Hendra Virus and biosecurity measures are put in place, it is very likely that there has been a high exposure risk to other horses, riders, grooms, officials, volunteers, and possibly spectators.

IF A HORE IS AT AN EVENT IS SUSPECTED of having Hendra virus all unvaccinated horsss will be kept quarantined at the event grounds for more than 30 days. (At inconvenience and expense to the owners of unvaccinated horses)

Vaccinated horses would be able to leave after assessment and external washing if necessary.

Never take a sick horse (or even an “off colour” horse) to an event!

Never take a horse to an event if it may have had contact with another sick horse at home

Never allow visiting professionals to work with a sick or “off colour” horse

WHAT CAN HORSE OWNERS DO AT HOME TO MINIMISE THE RISK OF HORSES GETTING HENDRA VIRUS?

- Hendra Vaccination for horses is believed to be the single most effective way of reducing the risk of Hendra virus infection, and it is important to keep vaccinations current i.e. initial vaccinations 3-6 weeks apart and then 6 monthly boosters.
- Remove horse feed and water from under trees – if possible place feed and water containers under a shelter
- Remove horses from paddocks where flowering or fruiting trees may attract flying foxes. If the horses cannot be removed from the paddock, consider fencing to restrict access to around flowering or fruiting trees. Also consider removing horses during times of peak flying fox activity (usually at dusk and during the night) Clean up any fruit debris underneath the trees before returning the horses.
- Don't leave any food lying around that may attract flying foxes – apples, carrots, molasses
- Clean and disinfect gear exposed to horse bodily fluids before using it on another horse (e.g. halters, ropes, bridles, twitches etc.)
- Ensure that all visitors – friends and professionals (farriers etc.) practice safe hygiene e.g. washing hands and disinfecting equipment that may be infected with bodily fluids

WHAT CAN HORSE OWNERS DO AT AN EVENT TO MINIMISE THE RISK OF HORSES GETTING HENDRA VIRUS?

- Practice all suggestions above, plus...
- Before leaving home: Clean and disinfect your equipment and truck/ float.
Wash Horses and clean out and wash hooves
- Don't allow horses to – meet nose to nose
Eat another horses feed
Drink from water containers that other horses have used
Sniff or graze near another horses manure or urine.
- Remove all manure from stable (and all other areas) **ASAP** to the designated area, and also remove wet sawdust or left over feed to the designated area.
- Don't allow other people to put their hands around your horse's mouth or nose.
- Minimize your personal contact with other horses, wash hands frequently etc.
- Don't use other people's equipment (unless disinfected)
- **ADVISE ORGANISERS IMMEDIATELY** if you suspect any horse is sick, and stop all non-essential contact with the sick horse.

WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU SUSPECT A HORSE MAY HAVE HENDRA VIRUS

- Contact a **VET** immediately
- If unable to reach a Vet, notify Biosecurity Queensland Officer – there is a legal obligation to do this. Clearly explain that you are reporting a suspected hendra virus infection and whether there has been any human exposure to bodily fluids from the sick horse. Note bodily fluids include saliva and nasal discharges (cough, or sneezing droplets) blood, urine, and faeces.
- BIOSECURITY QUEENSLAND 13 25 23 (business hours) or EMERGENCY ANIMAL DISEASE WATCH HOTLINE 1800675888 (24 Hour hotline)

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT A HORSE MAY HAVE HENDRA VIRUS

IMMEDIATELY:

- Contact Vet or emergency biosecurity officers
- Isolate the sick horse from any other animals or people
- Take all personal protection precautions possible to avoid catching the virus e.g.
 - cover cuts and abrasions with a water resistant dressing
 - Put on all PPE
 - Afterwards remove all PPE and dispose of it (avoiding contact with eyes, mouth and nose.
 - Carefully remove all clothing
 - Blow your nose
 - Shower and wash your hair
 - If you have cuts/ abrasions/ puncture wounds which may have had contact with horse's bodily fluids – rub them to cause slight bleeding and wash with soap and water
 - If eyes have been exposed to horse's bodily fluids, immediately gently but thoroughly rinse eyes with water or saline solution for at least 30 seconds.
 - If bodily fluids get in the mouth, spit the fluid out, and immediately rinse the mouth with water several times.
- **If you must have contact with a sick horse where Hendra has not been ruled out:**
 - Take all personal protection precautions possible as above
- If you have to care for other horses while awaiting results on a sick horse:
 - Avoid close contact with other horses – observe from a distance and immediately notify your Vet of any changes in their health/behaviour
 - If necessary to have closer contact, use all Personal Protection Precautions as above

CHILDREN AND PETS

- Be aware that children and pets are also at risk of catching hendra Virus from a horse with the virus, particularly if it is “shedding” the virus before symptoms show. Children may be more likely to put their unwashed hands into their mouths/ nose after being with horses and dogs love to eat dropped food and manure which may be contaminated with the Virus

IF A HORSE IS FOUND DEAD OR SUDDENLY DIES:

Hendra Virus should always be considered (even in the death of an old horse) so it is advised that you:

- Take all precautions as listed above
- Contact a Vet or biosecurity officer to exclude Hendra virus
- Removal / burial of the horse must be done in accordance with biosecurity precautions which can include Informing Contractors of risks and precautions required including:
 - Personal protection
 - Containment/ management of body fluids from the horse, disposal of contaminated soil etc
 - Care in cleaning equipment/ machinery used (Including not to use a high pressure hose to avoid splashes/ spray/ mist which could be contaminated.)

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Every horse owner should have a PPE kit which includes:

- Hand cleansers
 - Soap
 - Disinfectants
 - Waste disposal bags
 - Disposable gloves
 - Overalls
 - Rubber boots
 - Facial shields
 - safety glasses
 - P2 respirator is minimum recommended protection as surgical masks do not provide respiratory protection. However, a surgical mask is better than nothing
- Make sure your kit is easily accessible at all times.

DISINFECTION

- Ensure surfaces are clean so that the disinfectant can work properly – brush off loose dirt/manure, wash with detergent/ soap, and then use disinfectant
- Dip grooming tools in disinfectant
- Wipe tack with disinfectant – dampened cloth
- Scrub boots and spray with disinfectant
- Some examples of disinfectants are:
 - Household bleach (1 part to 10 parts water) use for tools and boots
 - Pine/ Dettol disinfectant – use for floats and tack
 - Chlorhexidine, Betadine or Virkon – good for most tack and equipment

THIS INFORMATION IS FOR THE GENERAL USE AND EDUCATION OF MEMBERS AND PUBLIC. PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU AVAIL YOURSELF OF ALL NEW INFORMATION AS IT COMES TO HAND. IT IS EVERY HORSE OWNERS PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY TO HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE AND TOOLS AT HAND TO DEAL WITH A SICK HORSE, AND THE CORRECT BIOSECURITY MEASURES THAT NEED TO BE TAKEN.