

7 July 2011

## Hendra virus confirmed at Macksville

A horse from a property near Macksville on the NSW Mid Coast was confirmed to be infected with Hendra virus on 6 July 2011.

The dead horse and its companion were sampled by a government veterinarian. The second horse tested negative for Hendra.

There is a fig tree in the mare's paddock, but no known bat colonies nearby. Bats are seen occasionally.

The property has been placed in quarantine and is being managed by the Department of Primary Industries and the Mid Coast Livestock Health and Pest Authority. Staff from the Department are continuing to work closely with NSW Health and government authorities in Queensland.

This incident is not linked to the other recent case in NSW and the recent cases in Queensland.

Restrictions are in place on the quarantined property and apply to the movement of horses and other items onto and off the property. In addition to the companion horse, two other horses on the property are being monitored.

The risk to neighbouring horses is being assessed.

## Hendra virus at Wollongbar

The remaining horse on this property is being monitored on a daily basis. Two more rounds of testing for Hendra virus must be conducted before the quarantine can be lifted.

## If you suspect your horse has Hendra virus

If you are concerned that your horse has Hendra virus, contact your private veterinarian. They will assess the horse and notify authorities if they suspect the horse is infected. If your vet is unavailable and the horse is deteriorating rapidly, please phone the emergency animal disease hotline on 1800 675 888.

There is a legal responsibility to report suspected Hendra cases 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.

## Horse movements in NSW

Hendra virus is not highly infectious and, consequently, the NSW horse industry is not subject to movement restrictions for Hendra virus - except for the properties under quarantine.

Hendra virus could potentially occur wherever there are fruit bats and horse owners should be vigilant for signs consistent with Hendra virus infection.

Horse owners should practice good biosecurity, and not travel, work on or take unwell horses to other properties or equestrian events.

## Reducing the risk to your horse

Horse owners can take the following steps to reduce the risk of horses becoming infected with Hendra virus. This advice is based on our current understanding of the virus:

- Place horse water containers under cover and feed horses under cover.
- Do not place horse feed and water containers under trees, particularly if flying foxes are attracted to those trees.
- If feed and water troughs must be placed in the shade of fruiting trees, consider building a cover over them to prevent contamination from above.
- Do not use feed that might be attractive to flying foxes if they are known to be in the area. Fruit and vegetables (e.g. apples, carrots) or anything sweet (e.g. molasses) may attract flying foxes.
- If possible, remove horses from paddocks when trees on which bats may feed are flowering. If this is not possible, fence or tape off the area under flowering trees. Alternatively, stable horses at high risk times when fruit bats are feeding or roosting in or around their paddocks.
- If it is not possible to remove horses from paddocks, try to temporarily remove your horses during times of peak flying fox activity (usually at dusk and during the night).

## Reducing the risk to yourself

Hendra can spread from an infected horse to a human even before the horse gets sick. Make it a rule at your stable to always use good hygiene.

### *Handling well horses*

Before handling any well horse:

- Cover any cuts and abrasions on exposed skin and wash hands well with soap and water, especially after handling your horse's mouth or nose (eg. Fitting or removing a bridle) and before eating, smoking or touching your eyes, nose or mouth,
- Don't kiss horses on the muzzle,
- Use personal protective equipment to protect yourself from the body fluids of horses.

### *Handling a sick horse*

If your horse is sick:

- Protect your skin, eyes and mouth as much as possible and avoid touching body fluids of sick horses (eg nasal discharge, saliva, blood, urine).
- If you are exposed to any body fluids, wash the area immediately using soap and water.
- Arrange for a vet to assess your horse ASAP.
- Do not allow anyone else to handle a sick horse (eg family members, farriers, horse dentists)

### *If you may have been exposed to an infected animal*

If you think you have been exposed to an infected animal:

- Contact your doctor or NSW Public Health. Local offices are listed at: [www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/Infectious/phus.asp](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/Infectious/phus.asp)
- A NSW Health Hendra Fact Sheet is available at: [www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/infectious/hendra.html](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/infectious/hendra.html)

## Further information

Further information on Hendra including a new fact sheet ([Hendra virus - Protecting you and your horse](#)) may be found at: <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/horses/health/general/hendra-virus>

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

**Ian Roth**

**Chief Veterinary Officer NSW**

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (7 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.