17 July 2011

Current Situation

Staff from the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities and the Department of Primary Industries are managing three properties quarantined for 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.

Hendra virus confirmed at Lismore

A horse from a property near Lismore on the NSW North Coast was confirmed to be infected with Hendra virus late on 16 July 2011.

The horse, an 11 year old gelding died suddenly on 14 July. It had been observed to be normal that morning and was found dead late in the afternoon with no evidence of struggling. Samples from the dead horse were collected by the Senior District Veterinarian with the North Coast Livestock Health and Pest Authority wearing full PPE and submitted to the state virology laboratory.

The dead horse was buried on the property.

There is a fig tree in the horse paddock and bats are seen occasionally.

The property has been placed in quarantine and is being managed by staff from the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities and the Department of Primary Industries.

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

The affected horse had not moved off the property in the last 32 days. Restrictions are in place on the quarantined property and apply to the movement of horses and other items onto and off the property.

The other horse on the property appears well; it has been sampled and will be monitored twice daily. The risk to neighbouring horses is being assessed.

The infected horse was not handled in the days prior to its death.

Hendra virus at Macksville

One property near Macksville on the NSW Mid Coast remains in quarantine.

One round of testing on all three horses on the property has been completed and all results are negative. The horses are being regularly monitored and remain well.

Hendra virus at Wollongbar

The property near Wollongbar where two horses died of Hendra virus will remain in quarantine until 10 days after the death of the second horse.

Hendra Virus **Taskforce**

The Hendra Virus Taskforce, comprising biosecurity and health experts from New South Wales, Queensland and the CSIRO, held their first meeting on Wednesday 13 July. The taskforce is scheduled to

meet again later this week.

The purpose of the taskforce is to analyse the situation in both states to better understand the incidents, identify areas for further collaboration and undertake longer term planning for managing the disease and its impacts.

Important updates to the Hendra virus page in the veterinary laboratory manual

The Hendra virus page in the veterinary laboratory manual has been updated and the revisions will be published on Monday. The updates include revised advice on sampling both live and dead horses.

Specimens required for diagnosis of Hendra virus infection:

Live horses: From each horse:

1. **10 mL blood in lithium heparin collected into an evacuated tube** - for polymerase chain reaction (PCR).
2. **10 mL clotted blood collected into an evacuated tube** - for serology and PCR.
3. **Nasal swabs from each nostril pooled in phosphate buffered glycerol saline (PBGS) or equivalent virus transport medium (VTM)** - for PCR. If no PBGS is available, swabs should be placed in 2 mL sterile saline.
4. **Swabs from the oral cavity, rectum (rectal mucosa not faeces) or urine collected separately into PBGS** - for PCR.

Dead horses: From each horse:

1. **10 mL clotted blood from the jugular vein collected into an evacuated tube** - this sample can be used for serology and PCR.
2. 2. **Submandibular lymph node collected into a sterile container and chilled** - this sample can be used for polymerase chain reaction (PCR). There is less risk in taking this sample of tissue compared to lung or other tissue.

Note: Due to the zoonotic risk of Hendra virus, minimally invasive postmortem examination is recommended. Dead horses can be sampled adequately for Hendra virus testing without conducting a complete postmortem examination.

Sampling media is available from the the State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (SDVL) 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.

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.

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.

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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