

Equine Influenza

The St Albans Lockdown

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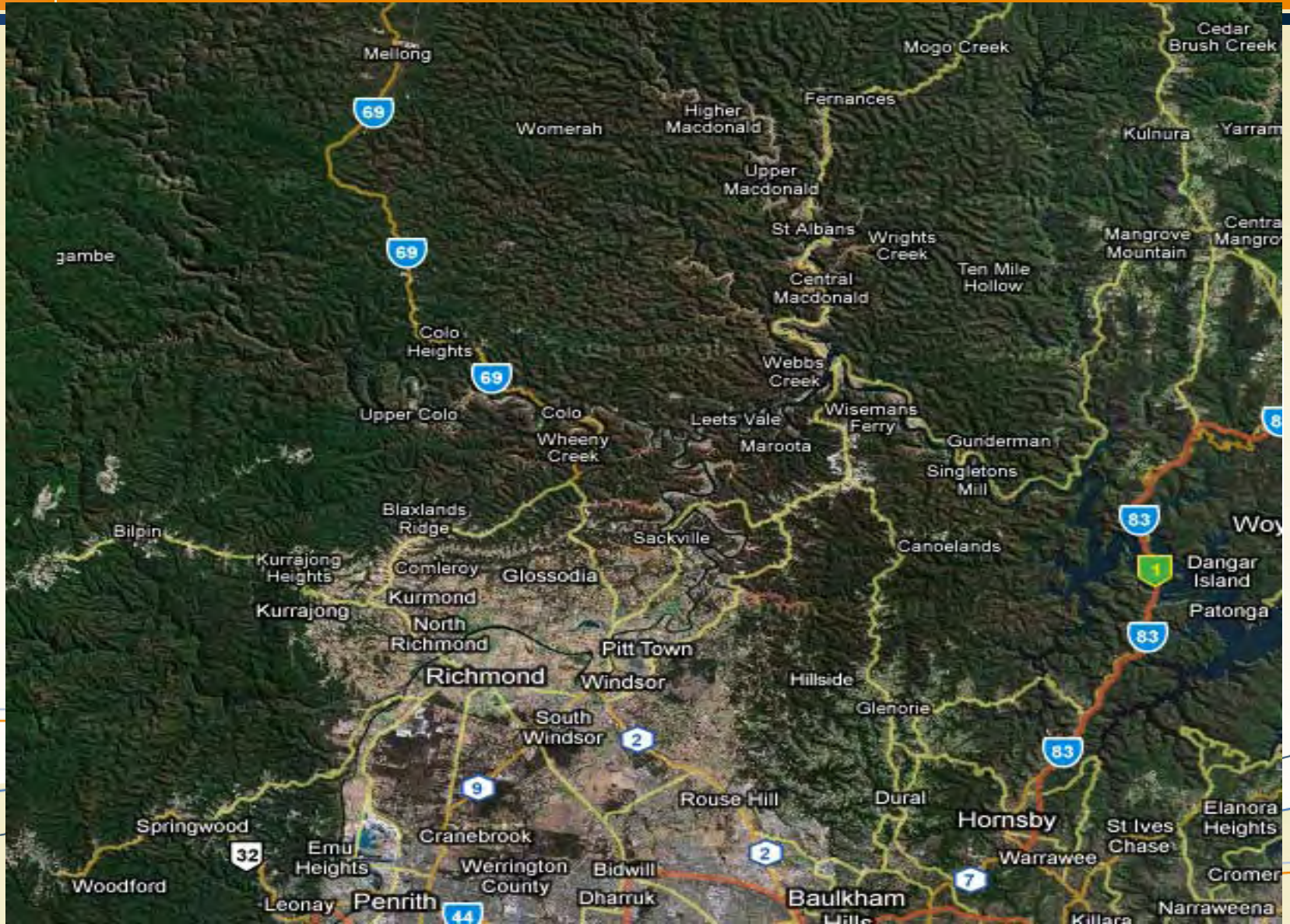
NSW DPI - Richmond



The Village

- St Albans is a tiny village located deep in the McDonald Valley about 90 minutes drive from Windsor.
- This historic village features the Settlers Arms Hotel, a guest house, rural fire station and around 20 homes.

Location





Espie St

St Albans NSW, Australia

Wharf St

Bulga St

What is Shahzada

- Shahzada is a 400km endurance event conducted over 5 days at St Albans since 1981.

Implementation of the Lockdown

- 25/8/07 1700hrs– Shazada cancelled by order NSW DPI
- 26/8/07 1730hrs – DPI staff issue permits to travel home.
- 27/8/07 0730hrs – DPI arrive back at camp and all Shahzada participants informed that permits revoked and the horses were in lockdown until further notice.

Consequences of Lockdown

- To cater for participants the Shahzada committee hires portable toilets, showers and other basic facilities. Event entry fees cover the costs of hiring facilities.
- Event cancellation resulted in cancellation of these facilities prior to lockdown occurring.

Situation

- 200 people with 90 plus horses not knowing when they could go home camped in and around the village.
- For DPI Staff priorities were maintaining compliance with the lockdown and providing for the welfare of the horses affected.



Assessing immediate concerns

- Communications – one line for fax, internet and incoming/outgoing calls. No digital mobile phone coverage within 30 min drive. CDMA with a booster aerial.
- No permanent on-site services to cater for basic health & hygiene for Shahzada inmates.
- Lack of fresh drinking water.
- Horse welfare issues – sufficient exercise, right feed & vet supplies.
- Reluctant organisational structure.
- Biosecurity - Horses spread throughout village on public roads – public contact exposure uncontrollable.

Positive aspects

- All horses constantly checked for TPR from arrival. All checks recorded.
- Private vet employed by Shahzada continues in an honorary role.
- Cohesive group
- Good weather

Communication issues

- Satellite phone arrived on day 2. Hilly terrain surrounding village restricted use.
- Shahzada organising committee took on a liaison role with DPI.
- Twice daily camp meetings held 1200 and 1800hrs.
- Confidentiality in communications often difficult.



Horse Welfare

- Risk assessment undertaken and a short (32km) riding course approved to allow horses to be exercised. Also great for morale.
- High roughage feed sourced.
- Vet supplies bought in and vet able to treat minor problems and injuries that occurred.

Services

- Arrangements made for a supply of fresh water.
- Portable showers and toilet arrangements re-instated with service by providers.
- Firewood and fuel for water pumps.
- All minimum health and hygiene standards met with no illnesses reported.

Sitting Ducks

- Over-riding issue was the risk presented from someone travelling through the village that may have had contact with the virus and infecting a horse.
- Travellers and locals were discouraged from going anywhere near a horse.

Testing, negotiation and waiting.

- We constantly re-affirmed at meetings that everything that could be done was being done to arrange release of the horses.
- Emphasised the need to maintain accurate TPR records for every horse and keep constant vigilance for signs of EI.
- DPI and Shahzada event committee continued to relay the message that they were clean and keen to go home before infection arrived.
- The uncertainties presented in this process provided a deal of stress and anxiety for all involved. The added factors of communication limitations and isolation contributed to the elevation of emotional response to the situation.

Maintaining morale

- Designated riding track
- Mock events
- Mini- gymkhana
- ‘Wedding’





Going home

- Thursday 30th notified that we would have a protocol for permit to go home. Briefing on procedure Thursday night.
- Friday morning – Full vetting of every horse starts. All must pass before any permits issued.
- Decon of floats and equipment starts.

Uh-oh

- About 1100 Friday notified that protocol was a draft and had not been signed off by CVO.
- Vet told to slow down
- DPI cars set up for quick escape.
- Harrowing two hours spent for the four people that new of this development

Relief

- CVO approval to issue permits finally granted.
- Announcement made that vet checks were done and all horses fit & healthy.
- Permits issued throughout the afternoon and a procession of horse vehicles made its way out of St Albans. Last permit issued around 1730hrs

Recognition

- DPI staff
 - Tony Day
 - Greg Glasgow
- Shahzada organising committee
 - President, Neil Clarkson
- LDCC & SDCHQ
- St Albans township