

30 August 2011

Current Situation

A new case of Hendra was confirmed late yesterday in a horse on a property near Ballina. As of 9 a.m. 30 August 2011, ten horses on eight properties in NSW have died after being confirmed to be infected with Hendra virus.

Samples submitted since 30 June 2011 from 171 other NSW properties with sick or dead horses properties have been confirmed as negative for the Hendra virus by PCR testing, with further confirmatory antibody testing still underway on some properties.

Staff from the Department of Primary Industries and the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities are managing five properties quarantined for Hendra virus incidents on the North Coast of NSW. They are continuing to work closely with NSW Health and government authorities in Queensland.

New Hendra virus case at north Ballina

The State Virology Laboratory at EMAI confirmed late on 29 August 2011 that samples submitted from a 10 year old gelding on a property near Ballina were positive for Hendra virus. The samples were collected by a private veterinarian.

The gelding was noticed on the morning of 27 August 2011 to be depressed, with a wide based front leg stance, swaying from side to side and was febrile. It placed its head into the feed bin but was unable to eat. It went down and died on the fence later in the day.

The dead horse had been moved into a small paddock with a number of flowering and fruiting trees a week ago.

Six of the ten infected horses in NSW have been found dead in fence lines. One of these horses was initially thought to have died by misadventure.

The dead horse has been buried on the property.

There are no other horses on the property, the dead horse had not moved off the property in the last 16 days and there are no neighbours with horses that have had contact with the dead horse.

Hendra virus at Ballina, Lismore and Mullumbimby

The property at Lismore was released from quarantine of Friday after the in contact horse tested negative on the 32 day post exposure test. The other infected properties near Ballina and Mullumbimby remain in quarantine.

The remaining animals on the properties appear well. They are monitored twice daily. All horses that have had close contact with an infected horse are tested initially then 16 and 32 after the infected horse died.

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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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (30 August 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.