

11 June 2013

CVO bulletin re: new Hendra virus case on the NSW North Coast

On the 5 June 2013 a 12 year old Anglo Arab mare died on a property near Macksville, and she subsequently returned positive PCR result for Hendra virus on blood and nasal swabs.

Clinical Signs

The mare had been observed earlier in the day and appeared normal. She was found dead later that afternoon, with some blood from the nostrils, there was no evidence of struggling prior to death.

Investigations and management

The following morning blood and nasal swabs were collected from the dead horse. PCR testing at the State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute (EMAI), Camden late on the 7 June 2013 confirmed positive results for Hendra virus.

The property has been quarantined and initial investigations indicate there have been no recent movements of horses from this property.

There is an 11 year old companion mare, three dogs and two cats on the property. These animals have all been sampled and initial test results are negative. All the animals remain well; their health will continue to be monitored while the property is in quarantine.

The companion mare has been vaccinated.

Vaccination

Vaccination is the single most effective way of reducing the risk of Hendra virus infection in horses. Human infection and death have occurred following high-level exposure to body fluids from an infected horse. Vaccinating horses is an important measure to prevent this occurring and provides a public health and workplace health and safety benefit.

Advice for Veterinarians

It is recommended veterinarians consider the possibility of Lyssavirus infections when treating suspect Hendra virus cases. Both diseases can present with neurological signs, stance and gait changes, pyrexia and general malaise in the early stages. It is important to ensure sound hygiene and biosecurity measures are adopted when handling sick and "in contact" horses, including their oronasal discharges, blood and other body fluids. Appropriate PPE should be used.

Veterinarians are encouraged to discuss the use of the Hendra vaccine as a risk mitigation tool with horse owners and managers.

Further information

The DPI website “[Hendra virus- Information for vets](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/horses/health/general/hendra-virus/vets)” at <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/horses/health/general/hendra-virus/vets> contains information on:

- Biosecurity guidelines
- Sampling, packaging, submission and transport of specimens
- Human health issues (or phone NSW Health on 1300 066 055)
- Work Health and Safety Responsibilities (or phone Workcover Authority of NSW 131050).

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (11 June 2013). 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.