



The Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP

Minister for Primary Industries

Minister for Small Business

MEDIA RELEASE

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GREEN LIGHT FOR VITAL HENDRA RESEARCH PROJECTS

NSW Minister for Primary Industries Katrina Hodgkinson has today announced new research projects aimed at protecting our equine industry from the deadly Hendra virus.

“\$5 million has been allocated to five research projects looking at vital issues such as how the virus is transmitted, vaccine development, flying fox dispersal, transmission in dogs and testing and risk management strategies,” Katrina Hodgkinson said.

“The research projects are being coordinated through the cross-border Hendra taskforce, which includes Chief Veterinary Officers, Chief Health Officers and Chief scientists from both states as well as CSIRO representatives.

“The NSW Government’s world-renowned Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute will lead a \$900,000 study looking at virology issues, including new state-of-the-art testing techniques and how various animals, including horses, dogs and cats, contract and respond to the deadly disease.

“The project will provide vital intelligence to both Government authorities and private veterinarians on the risk factors that lead to transmission and how we can take steps to prevent infection of other horses, and critically, humans.

“An epidemiologist from NSW’s Wollongbar Primary Industries Institute is also closely involved in research projects looking at the transmission of the virus from flying foxes to horses and the impact flying fox dispersal has on virus infection levels.

“The research teams bring together some of the world’s leading thinkers in epidemiology, virology, veterinary science, and zoonotic and human health fields.

“NSW and Queensland Governments have committed a total of \$6 million, with submissions now being sought for the remaining funds.”

Katrina Hodgkinson said this year has been the largest outbreak of Hendra the two States have seen.

“In NSW the virus claimed ten horse deaths at eight properties, all on the NSW North Coast,” Katrina Hodgkinson said.

“These critical new research projects aim to get to the bottom of this year’s spike and look at new ways to reduce further cases in the future and ultimately minimise the risk of human infection.

“Hendra is a deadly virus and the NSW Government is taking every precaution possible to protect the health of our community and the State’s valuable horse industries.

“From one end of the State to the other, NSW Department of Primary Industries and the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities are working with landholders and private veterinarians to undertake extensive surveillance of suspect cases.

“NSW authorities have assessed some 220 properties since we identified the first case at Wollongbar back in June 2011.”

HENDRA RESEARCH PROJECTS

Transmission and impacts of Hendra virus in dogs

Lead Agency: CSIRO Australian Animal Health Laboratory
Funding: \$225,000

This project will assess the potential for dogs to transmit Hendra virus to people or other animals and provide a basis to inform policy for managing dogs exposed to Hendra virus.

Assessing the risks posed by Hendra virus antibody positive animals

Lead agency: NSW DPI's Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute
Funding: \$870,000

This project consists of a number of studies that will address issues associated with the detection of antibodies in animals exposed to Hendra virus.

Flying fox dispersal and Hendra virus risk

Lead agency: Biosecurity Queensland, Queensland Centre for Emerging Infectious Diseases
Funding: \$550,000

The study will provide scientific evidence about whether the dispersal of flying fox colonies affects stress levels or Hendra virus excretion

Hendra virus infection and transmission dynamics

Lead agency: Biosecurity Queensland, Queensland Centre for Emerging Infectious Diseases
Funding: \$3,000,000

The project aims to identify the key factors associated with the transmission of Hendra virus from flying foxes to horses. These studies will improve our understanding of how key ecological factors are related to the risk of Hendra virus transmission.

Refining development of the equine Hendra vaccine

Lead Agency: CSIRO Australian Animal Health Laboratory
Funding: \$360,000

This project will demonstrate the effectiveness of the final formulation of the Hendra virus vaccine and ensure the most rapid availability of a vaccine for horses.