

18 August 2011

Current Situation

Three new cases of Hendra were confirmed late yesterday in horses on two properties near Ballina and Mullumbimby. As of 9 a.m. 18 August 2011, in the year-to-date, nine horses on seven properties in NSW have died after being confirmed to be infected with Hendra virus.

Samples submitted since 30 June 2011 from 153 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 Mullumbimby

The State Virology Laboratory at EMAI confirmed late on 17 August 2011 that samples submitted from a mare at Mullumbimby were positive for Hendra virus. The samples were collected by a private vet after the horse was found dead on 13 August. The horse had been noticed to be behaving oddly the previous day. A plant poisoning was initially suspected to be the cause of death. The dead horse was buried on the property.

There is 1 remaining horses on the property.

New Hendra virus case at south Ballina

The State Virology Laboratory at EMAI confirmed late on 17 August 2011 that samples submitted from two dead horses on a large property near Ballina were positive for Hendra virus. The samples were collected by the local district veterinarian. The precise time of death of these horses is currently unknown. The dead horses are being buried on the property.

There are a number of large fig trees on this property.

There are 4 remaining horses on the property.

Hendra virus at Ballina, Lismore and Mullumbimby

The other infected properties near Ballina, Lismore 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.

Submission for routine monitoring of healthy horses

Submitters are reminded to **record the reason for testing as 'Monitoring'** rather than **'Diagnostic'** where samples are submitted from healthy horses.

All costs for the testing of healthy horses will be charged to the submitter.

Please advise immediately if the horse develops symptoms suggestive of infection so that testing can be prioritized and reclassified as diagnostic.

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 (18 July 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.