

09 NOVEMBER 2007

EQUINE INFLUENZA

CHIEF VETERINARY OFFICER COMMUNICATION #13

UPDATE ON BIOSECURITY PROCEDURES

Veterinary practitioners are working at the frontline in the current Equine Influenza control and eradication program. A key component of this campaign is the maintenance of strict biosecurity protocols to ensure that veterinarians who contact horses do not spread disease. Veterinarians are expected as professionals to uphold these standards and encourage their staff and clients to see the important role that biosecurity plays in disease control.

A new Control Order was made on 8 November 2007 under section 22 of the *Exotic Diseases of Animals Act 1991* requiring disinfection in the Amber Zone. This is additional to the requirements already existing for disinfection in the Red and Purple Zone.

When must you disinfect?

You **MUST** disinfect yourself and your vehicle and equipment in the following circumstances. Failure to disinfect may result in fines or imprisonment.

Purple Zone – Before you leave a Purple Zone (Special Restricted Area) if you have come into contact with horses or horse products.

Red and Amber Zone – On entering a premise in the Red or Amber Zone (Restricted Area) and before you come into contact with any horse or horse product.

Red and Amber Zone – Before you leave a premise in a Red or Amber Zone (Restricted Area) if you have come into contact with horses or horse products.

Any Zone – Upon leaving a property where a quarantine order is in place.

These orders apply to all persons but are particularly important for veterinarians because of the higher risk associated with contact with sick horses and because the community expects that veterinarians will not spread disease. Veterinarians should also ensure that staff they are supervising comply with these orders.

Penalties apply to people who don't comply with these requirements – a fine of up to \$22,000 or up to six months imprisonment. Complaints may also be lodged with the NSW Veterinary Practitioners Board in regard to 'unprofessional conduct'.

It is also **STRONGLY RECOMMENDED** that you disinfect yourself and your vehicle and equipment in the following circumstances:

Green Zone – After you come into contact with any horse or horse product.

The following guidelines are designed to help you comply with the legal requirements for disinfection:

Before coming into contact with horses:

1. Completely cover your person with overalls that may be disposed of or disinfected before removal from the site.
2. Completely cover your hair with a disposable hood or hat.
3. Put on a face mask.
4. Put on gloves.
5. Put on rubber boots or disposable footwear that completely encloses your feet.

After coming into contact with horses:

1. After collecting any specimens, package them into a plastic bag to take back to the car.

2. At the car, blow your nose into a tissue. Place the tissue in a plastic bag and leave onsite for disposal.
3. Decontaminate your hands with soap, detergent or disinfectant.
4. Clean and disinfect the outside of the sample bag using soap, detergent or disinfectant and pack into a disposable esky with ice bricks.
5. Disinfect any equipment you have used, e.g. thermometer, vacutainer holder, by thoroughly cleaning with soap, detergent or disinfectant.
6. Scrub rubber boots using soap, detergent or disinfectant before placing in vehicle.
7. Remove overalls, gloves, mask and hair covering and leave on site for disposal or disinfect before removal from the site.
8. Wash hands, arms and any exposed skin or hair thoroughly with surgical scrub or soap. Continue washing for at least two minutes. Make sure any exposed skin that may have been contaminated with saliva, nasal secretions or mucus is cleaned thoroughly.
9. After returning home have a thorough shower for at least three minutes, including hair wash, and change into clean clothes.

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (9 November 2007). 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 New South Wales Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.