**Department of Primary Industries**
Department of Regional NSW

20 July 2023

## CHIEF VETERINARY OFFICER BULLETIN

# Hendra virus confirmed in an unvaccinated horse near Newcastle – July 2023

Hendra virus has been confirmed in a 24-year-old unvaccinated horse on a property near Newcastle, north of Sydney.

The detection of the virus was confirmed by PCR (polymerase chain reaction) testing at NSW Department of Primary Industries' **NSW Animal and Plant Health Laboratories at the** Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute laboratory on Tuesday, 18 July 2023.

A private veterinarian attended the affected horse.

The horse was reportedly depressed, uncoordinated, with a nasal discharge and high temperature. Samples for suspect Hendra virus were collected for testing and the attending veterinarian notified the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline.

NSW DPI and Local Land Services District Veterinarians are working with the private veterinarian to undertake a risk assessment on the property. At this stage, no other animals are showing any signs of ill health.

In addition, Public Health Officers from Hunter New England Health are undertaking risk assessments of any people who have had contact with the infected horse as a public health precaution.

## Other information:

Hendra virus infection is notifiable in NSW under the NSW Biosecurity Act. Most cases in NSW have occurred on the north coast, with a case at Scone in 2019 and Wallsend, near Newcastle in October 2021 being the most recent and southernmost case previously.

In NSW, to date there have been 26 horse deaths as a result of Hendra virus on 25 properties since the first NSW case in 2006.

There have been no human deaths from Hendra virus in NSW.

Vaccination of horses is the most effective way to help manage Hendra virus disease. Expert opinion suggests that the current vaccine is likely to provide immunity against the variant strain as well as the normal Hendra virus strain.

Other measures that horse owners and people that work closely with horses can put in place to reduce the risk of infection with Hendra virus and other henipaviruses, include:

- Stable horses overnight
- Place feed and water containers under cover so they cannot be contaminated from above
- Reduce flying fox and horse interaction by removing feed and water containers from under or near trees and removing horses or restricting their access to paddocks where flowering and/or fruiting trees may be attracting flying foxes

- Adopt sound hygiene and biosecurity measures as a routine practice for all horse contact including:
    - Washing hands regularly and cover any cut/wound with a water-resistant dressing
    - Using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when working with horses
    - Cleaning and disinfecting equipment that has been in contact with horses' body fluids.

If your horse is unwell, keep people and animals away from the horse and call your private veterinarian immediately.

The signs of Hendra virus infection are very non-specific early on and if veterinarians require assistance, then

- Call the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on **1800 675 888** or
- Your Local Land Services district veterinarian on **1300 795 299** or
- Find further information on Hendra virus visit, www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/hendra.