

5 SEPTEMBER 2007

EQUINE INFLUENZA

CHIEF VETERINARY OFFICER COMMUNICATION #3

Letter to all registered veterinary practitioners

Dear practitioner,

First and foremost, thank you for your valuable assistance so far in the management of the outbreak of Equine Influenza (EI) in NSW.

Although we're still identifying known and potential sources of infection I'm confident that, with the cooperation of industry and professionals like yourself, we can start to control the spread and contain the disease.

Eradication is currently the most cost-effective long-term goal, but to achieve it I need to ask for your assistance in the following matters.

STANDSTILL

Biosecurity is of the utmost importance in managing the spread of EI. The current standstill applies to horses and to all horse products. Horse products include things like respiratory secretions and faeces. **This means it is illegal for you to leave a property with any horse product on your clothes, hair, skin or equipment.** A general permit has been issued to allow you to move diagnostic samples.

COMPLETING FORMS

Whenever examining a horse for EI at the request of LDCC you must always fill out the 'ANEMIS 1 for horses' fully and accurately, even if the horse does not appear to be infected. The form needs to be submitted to LDCC as soon as you return to your practice.

It is particularly important that you provide the exact location of the horse/s you are examining, and the total number of horses on the property. A property name and locality alone is not sufficient, we need more precise information:

- full property name and address including standard rural addressing number,
- property identification code (PIC) if available,
- a sketch map of the location of the property on the second page,
- lot and DP numbers if available from local council rate notice,
- map reference or GPS readings if available. You may be able to borrow a GPS from the local Rural Lands Protection Board. Remember to mark on the map where you were standing when you took the reading.

If you are going to take samples from the horse and submit them to the Regional Veterinary Laboratory (RVL) at Menangle, you will also need to fill out:

- RVL sample submission form,
- 'ANEMIS 2.3 for horses',
- key list if more than one horse has been sampled.

You must fill out all these forms completely and accurately and submit them as detailed below.

SUBMITTING DIAGNOSTIC SAMPLES AND FORMS

Significant delays are occurring with EI sample processing at RVL Menangle due to problems with the packaging of samples and forms.

Please remember that EI is an exotic disease and all materials that have been in contact with biological substances must be decontaminated at the laboratory. This includes any forms that are packed in contact with samples. Decontaminating these forms is a time-consuming process that is severely hampering the lab's operations.

RVL Menangle has therefore requested that vets who are submitting samples:

- label all sample containers very clearly,
- complete and submit all required forms,
- package all forms in one zip-lock bag and swabs and blood samples another zip-lock bag. **Do not put paperwork and samples together in the same bag.** Note: the sleeve on the sample submission bags is ideal for separately packaging the forms,
- package samples and forms from different properties in separate bundles,
- use only disposable eskies for samples - eskies cannot be decontaminated and returned at this stage.

MORE INFORMATION AND ACCESS TO BLANK FORMS

You will find an 'Information for Veterinarians' section on the NSW DPI Equine Influenza web page which will allow easier and faster access to forms and information specifically required by vets. Please check this site to ensure you have the current guidelines, legal requirements and forms for veterinarians at:

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/equine-influenza>

I understand that vets in the field are under tremendous pressure at present. Your contribution to the EI response is critical to the effort to contain the disease, and the samples you submit and the information that you provide on the forms is vital.

Yours sincerely

BRUCE M CHRISTIE
NSW CHIEF VETERINARY OFFICER

5 September 2007

© State of New South Wales through NSW Department of Primary Industries 2007

Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (4 September 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.