

27 JUNE 2008

EQUINE INFLUENZA

CHIEF VETERINARY OFFICER COMMUNICATION # 31

URGENT FOR ALL VETERINARIANS

Completion of the Equine Influenza (EI) Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) Response

Following national agreement, the EI EAD response will conclude on 30 June 2008 when all areas in Australia are considered “free” from EI.

This last step in the battle against EI finally brings Australia’s largest ever exotic animal disease outbreak to a successful conclusion. My thanks again go out to all the veterinarians who contributed to the response, without your help EI would have become endemic. Many international experts believed we could not eradicate EI. Veterinarians have again demonstrated that by working with industry, Australia can successfully eradicate animal diseases.

From 1 July 2008 a Travelling Horse Statement (THS) will not be required before moving horses, the remaining green zone will revert to white in line with the rest of the state and all EI cross-border requirements will be removed. Event registration will continue.

The NSW disease control headquarters in Orange will be closed on 30 June 2008. Staff from the Animal Biosecurity unit in head office Orange will manage outstanding issues relating to EI.

The EI fax number remains: (02) 6361 9967

Proteqflu vaccine permission

Please remember that the current APVMA permit authorising the use of Proteqflu vaccine expires on 30 June 2008. All Chief Veterinary Officer authorisations permitting veterinarians to administer Proteqflu also expire on 30 June 2008.

The emergency dealing determination from the Office of Gene Technology will continue for a short period to allow the return of unused vaccine. When this permission expires possession of this vaccine will be an offence under federal legislation and the department of Health will have the power to seize and destroy all vaccine stores.

Please arrange to promptly return any vaccine stocks not used by 30 June to your distributor e.g. Racing NSW, Provet, EFA.

Reporting and investigating horses with signs indicative of Equine Influenza (EI)

Please remember to continue to report all cases of respiratory illness in horses consistent with the national case definition for EI below, to the Emergency Animal Disease Watch hotline on 1800 675 888.

“Equine influenza is a respiratory disease of horses and other equidae that causes coughing, nasal discharge, depression, inappetance and fever of more than 38.5°C. In a single horse, a combination of these signs constitutes a suspect case.”

The disease has a high morbidity and in groups of susceptible horses, a significant proportion is likely to be very rapidly affected.

Horses that are recently recovered are unlikely to be infected but can act as mechanical carriers of the virus. Horses that have been vaccinated can be infected, and infective, excreting small amounts of virus for several days after infection, as well as mechanical carriers of the virus, without necessarily exhibiting overt clinical signs.”

A DPI biosecurity veterinarian will assess the case and decide whether or not to task an investigation including inspection and sampling, normally up to six ‘at risk’ horses. The owner’s private practitioner will usually be the vet tasked to undertake the investigation and collect the samples.

The collection, submission and laboratory costs associated with tasked investigations will continue to be met as part of the disease response.

For further information on property visits to horses with signs consistent with possible EI (including sampling, biosecurity and sample submission) see: <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/vets>

Please remember that EI is a notifiable disease in New South Wales under both the *Exotic Disease of Animals Act 1991* and the *Stock Diseases of Animals Act 1923*. Failure to notify a suspected case of EI carries a maximum penalty of \$22,000.

Outstanding invoices

The department is now finalising our accounts for work conducted during the response. Please ensure that if you have any outstanding tax invoices for work undertaken during the response that are submitted promptly.

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (27 June 2008). 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.