

Hendra virus – information for industry

Biosecurity Queensland alert

24 January 2013

Hendra virus case near Mackay

Biosecurity Queensland is managing a Hendra virus incident near Mackay after a positive test result was received on the evening of 22 January 2013.

An 18 year old Australian Stock Horse gelding was noticed to be moving slowly on 19 January 2013; however this was reported as not unusual for the horse. On 20 January 2013 the horse almost fell when its front shoes were removed, was wobbly when walking and noticed to have no blink reflex.

The horse was found dead on the morning of 21 January 2013. A complete history is unable to be obtained as the horse owner was away for the six days preceding 19 January 2013.

A private veterinarian visited on 21 January 2013 and collected samples from the dead horse for Hendra virus testing. The veterinarian utilised appropriate personal protective equipment to collect the samples.

Biosecurity Queensland has quarantined the property and undertaken initial tracing and risk assessments to determine susceptible animals that may have had exposure to the virus.

Testing and monitoring will be undertaken over the next month.

While under quarantine, restrictions will apply to moving horses and horse materials on and off the infected property. There are no other movement restrictions for the general Queensland horse population for Hendra virus.

Hendra virus vaccine

A Hendra virus vaccine for horses has been released commercially under a special permit. Under permit conditions, only accredited veterinarians can administer the vaccine.

The vaccine provides another option for the horse industry to reduce the risk of Hendra virus infection. As no vaccine is completely effective in 100% of horses, people in contact with horses need to continue to practice good biosecurity and hygiene measures even if horses are vaccinated.

Horse owners should discuss the option of vaccinating their horse with their veterinarian.

More information

This case highlights that Hendra virus cases can occur at any time of the year. More information on how to reduce the risk of infection can be found in the Hendra virus information pack for horse owners at www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au

Notify suspected Hendra virus cases by contacting Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 (business hours) or the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888 (24-hour hotline).

Contact your GP, local Queensland Health Emergency Department or local Public Health Unit if you have concerns about possible exposure of people to a horse with Hendra virus infection.

For general enquiries about the infection of Hendra virus in humans, call the Queensland Health Hotline on 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) or visit www.health.qld.gov.au

For information about managing Hendra virus risks at workplaces, contact Workplace Health and Safety Queensland on 1300 369 915 or visit www.worksafe.qld.gov.au

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