

4 September 2015

## CVO Bulletin to Horse Owners: Hendra virus case at Lismore, September 2015

An unvaccinated 8 year gelding at Lismore was euthanased on 3 September 2015 after a short illness. The horse exhibited neurological signs including ataxia, depression and was unable to sit up from lateral recumbency. Prior to being euthanased, it also had a slight nasal discharge. Samples were collected by the private veterinarian and all the samples tested positive to Hendra virus at the Elizabeth MacArthur Agricultural Institute (EMAI).

The private veterinarian wore personal protective equipment when sampling the horse and there has been no other human contact. The dead horse has been buried and the property has been quarantined.

The horse was in a paddock with a fig tree which contained a colony of bats.

Another unvaccinated horse, three dogs and a cat on the property remain well and are being monitored.

The case is being managed by the North Coast Local Land Service.

### Hendra Vaccination

**Vaccination of horses against Hendra virus is the single most effective way of reducing the risk of Hendra virus infection in both horses and humans.** Human infection and deaths have occurred following high-level exposure to body fluids from infected horses. Vaccinating horses is an important measure to prevent this occurring and provides a public health and workplace health and safety benefit.

### Reminder to Horse Owners

1. This is the season when Hendra virus is more common in NSW i.e. the cooler months of the year.
2. Horse owners should talk to their vet about vaccinating their horses for Hendra virus to protect both the horses and their human handlers.
3. The symptoms of Hendra virus infection are not specific. Horses may be listless, feverish, show signs of colic, neurological signs (wobbly, head tilt, unusual gait etc), respiratory symptoms, abnormal behaviour or die suddenly.
4. Owners with sick horses should contact their local veterinarian who will notify a Local Lands Service inspector or an inspector with DPI if they consider the case highly suspect for Hendra virus. If your veterinarian is unavailable, and the horse's illness is progressing rapidly, call the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on **1800 675 888**.
5. Owners should be aware of the risks associated with handling sick horses. The signs of Hendra virus are quite variable so **all sick horses should be handled cautiously and carefully and with as little contact as possible**.
6. **Children, domestic pets and other companion horses should not contact sick horses.**

### Management of suspect Hendra cases

- Always use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when handling sick horses
- DO NOT allow sick horses to be handled by children or other people.

- Isolate sick horses from pets or other horses.
- DO NOT allow dogs or other animals to contact sick or dead horses. Keep them away from the sick horse and its body fluids.
- DO NOT move sick horses to another area as this may spread the infection.

## Further information

The DPI website '[Hendra virus](#)' contains further information.

DPI website -Hendra virus -

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/horses/health/general/hendra-virus>

Other contact details include:

- NSW Health has a factsheet that has important information regarding human health risks for Hendra virus - [Hendra factsheet](#) or phone NSW Health on 1300 066 055.
- Work Health and Safety Responsibilities (phone Workcover Authority of NSW 131050).

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (24 June 2015). 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 NSW Department Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.