



25 July 2011

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

**HENDRA VIRUS INFECTION**

Currently in Victoria we have not had a positive Hendra Virus infected horse. However with the recent cases in Queensland and northern NSW we must be aware of the risks surrounding Hendra virus and the need for preventative measures to minimise the risk of horse and human infection.

Hendra virus is a disease of horses and humans that can cause a serious and life threatening illness. The natural hosts of Hendra virus are bats (flying foxes) which can then pass the virus onto horses. Human infection results from close contact with the blood, body fluids and tissues of infected horses. There is no evidence of human-to-human or bat-to-human spread of Hendra virus.

It is known from previous outbreaks that first contact with the virus usually occurs in the paddock, when a horse is grazing under a tree inhabited by flying foxes, comes in contact with the virus-laden flying fox excreta and other bodily fluid aerosols. The infected horse can then pass the infection on to other horses that are in close proximity, such as in a stable environment. Horses returning to a racing stable from a spelling property therefore pose a relatively greater risk of transmitting infection than horses already in the stable.

Hendra virus infection of horses can include rapid onset of illness, increased temperature, increased heart rate, discomfort or weight shifting between legs, depression, respiratory and neurological signs and rapid death. Not all of these signs will be found in any one infected horse.

**Key signs in horses**

- acute onset of illness
- increased body temperature
- increased heart rate

**INDUSTRY RACING NOTICE NO: 689.**

- discomfort/ weight shifting between legs
- depression
- rapid deterioration

**Respiratory signs**

- pulmonary oedema and congestion
- respiratory distress — increased respiratory rates
- terminal nasal discharge — can be initially clear, watery discharge progressing to stable white froth and/or stable blood-stained froth

**Neurological signs**

- ‘wobbly gait’ progressing to loss of control of muscle movement
- altered consciousness — apparent loss of vision in one or both eyes, aimless walking in a dazed state
- head tilting, circling
- muscle twitching
- urinary incontinence
- lying down with inability to get up
- terminal weakness, loss of control of muscle movement and collapse

**Protection of horses**

The risk of Hendra virus infection in horses is higher in situations where horses are kept outdoors in areas where flying foxes are known to inhabit. Flying foxes often visit properties where native eucalypts, bottlebrushes, lilli-pillies, figs and melaleucas are flowering. Blossoms are their primary source of food. They will also feed on palm seeds and exotic fruits when native food is less abundant.

Horse owners/trainers should follow these steps to protect their horses:

- Place feed and water containers under cover if possible
- Do not place feed and water containers under trees, particularly if flying foxes are attracted to those trees.
- Do not use feed that might be attractive to flying foxes if they are known to be in the area. Fruit and vegetables (e.g. apples, carrots) or anything sweet (e.g. molasses) may attract flying foxes.
- If possible, remove horses from paddocks where flowering or fruiting trees have resulted in a temporary surge in flying fox numbers. Return the horses after the trees have stopped flowering or fruiting.
- If removal of horses from paddocks is not possible, restrict their access to the areas where the flying foxes are active and for the period of time they are present (e.g., by fencing off trees where the animals roost or where they gather while flowers and fruit are present).

**INDUSTRY RACING NOTICE NO: 689.**

- Maintain a high level of routine stable hygiene, including covering any cuts or abrasions on exposed skin before handling horses and washing hands well with soap and water, especially after handling your horse's mouth or nose (eg fitting or removing a bridle) and before eating, smoking or touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

**Protection of humans**

Human infection is thought to occur through contact with body fluids of infected horses. As a precaution, people in close contact with horses that have Hendra-like signs should wear overalls, protective face masks, goggles and gloves and take care with personal disinfection. It is strongly advised that you avoid contact with sick horses and their blood and body fluids until a veterinarian has excluded Hendra virus infection as the cause of illness.

The risk of human infection can be greatly reduced by adopting good hygiene practices as a matter of routine, by washing your hands with soap and water regularly before, during and after handling horses.

For further information on Hendra Virus please refer to the Department of Primary Industries website.

<http://new.dpi.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/animal-diseases/horses/hendra-virus>

To report suspicions of Hendra virus infection, contact your local vet or the Department of Primary Industries on 136 186.

# RACING VICTORIA BIOSECURITY PLAN FOR SUSPECT HENDRA VIRUS CASES

In the event of a suspicious Hendra Virus infection, an owner and/or trainer must contact their local vet or official Racing Victoria (RV) Veterinarian. The Department of Primary Industries must be immediately contacted on **136 186**. In accordance with Local Rule 29A and Australian Rule 64K the Stewards must also be notified of the suspected infection.



Veterinarian to perform initial clinical exam on suspect HeV case (low – high risk)  
(Veterinarians are advised to provide own Personal Protective Equipment (PPE))  
The examination/investigation to be carried out under the guidance of the Department of Primary Industries

## AT RACES



## AT TRAINING LOCATION

**Veterinarian to relocate and secure horse to designated ISOLATION AREA (swab stall or other designated area).** Immediate steps are to be taken to reduce risk of exposure to yourself and others (PPE), promote personal hygiene and appropriate decontamination.

**Veterinarian to secure horse to designated ISOLATION AREA.** Immediate steps are to be taken to reduce risk of exposure to yourself and others (PPE), promote personal hygiene and appropriate decontamination.

**Veterinarian to allocate exit/entry to isolation area and set up decontamination zone.**

**Trainer in consultation with veterinarian to identify at-risk horses** (horses that were transported together with suspect horse, housed together for 3 days with suspect horse prior to transport, or stabled adjacent to suspect horse on race day). These horses are to be isolated from other horses at the property pending sample results from suspect case.

**Stewards in consultation with veterinarian to identify at-risk horses** (horses that were transported together with suspect horse, housed together for 3 days with suspect horse prior to transport, or stabled adjacent to suspect horse on race day). These horses are to be isolated from other horses in race day stables. At risk horses to return to trainer's property and be isolated from other animals pending sample results from suspect case.

**No horses are permitted to enter or leave the property until permitted by the Stewards.**

Stewards to enforce designated **isolation protocol**

**Stewards in consultation with veterinarian to decide whether race meeting proceeds.**  
(Decision made on a case by case).

**Note: Ensure personal protective equipment is used at all times whilst attending to suspected Hendra cases. If accidental exposure to blood or body fluid or sharps injury occurs, wash the affected area of skin thoroughly with soap and water and/or irrigate mucous membranes with water or saline. Seek immediate medical advice.**

**In consultation with DPI, the horse is returned to the trainer's stable or remains in isolation on course or is referred to an appropriate Equine Clinic for further isolation and treatment. Sampling of the suspect horse to be performed at the discretion of the official veterinarian.**  
(Equipment required for sampling would include: 1x EDTA blood tube, 1x plain blood tube, 1x 10ml Lith/hep tube, 1x oral swab, 1x nasal swab, 1x rectal swab, +/- urine swab).

**ALL Samples to be sent to DPI for testing. Department of Primary, 475 Mickleham Road, Attwood.**



Negative HeV result



Positive HeV result



**Stewards** to notify trainers of negative result. Horse(s) can be released when quarantine is officially withdrawn from the location.



**Stewards** to notify trainers of **positive** result. Case becomes managed by DPI.