

Guidelines for the management of suspect Hendra cases at horse events

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Biosecurity Plan for event organisers

When organising a horse event, Biosecurity NSW recommends organisers develop a plan for the running of their event. The plan should include:

1. A record of:
 - the identification details of all horses at the event
 - where horses are held during the event (a map)
 - where horses were located before the event
 - where horses will be after the event and
 - the name and contact details of the person responsible for each horse
2. Recommendations to minimise potential Hendra transmission such as:
 - No sick horses to be brought to an event
 - Keeping the horse in the allocated stable or yard
 - Prohibiting or restricting dogs and other pet animals
 - Minimising contact between horses
 - Individual feed and water containers
 - No sharing of equipment
3. A contingency plan for managing a suspected Hendra virus case which includes:
 - Supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE)
 - A designated isolation area in which a suspect horse can be isolated (this area should be off limits to the public and other competitors and at least 10 metres from any other animal)
 - Supplies of black and yellow hazard tape (available from hardware stores)
 - A list of people trained in the use of PPE who can assist in handling a suspect horse
 - A public address system that can be heard all over the ground

- Disposal arrangements (deep burial on site or an alternative disposal site).

Sick horses at events

If a horse becomes sick at an event, the person in charge of the horse should have the horse assessed, preferably by a veterinarian. An initial assessment may be done by a health steward or other event official.

If it is assessed that the horse may have Hendra virus based on **clinical signs** and possible flying fox exposure, it should be moved to the isolation area in accordance with the instructions below.

Suspect Hendra case

When a veterinarian at a horse event assesses there is a medium to high risk of Hendra virus infection, the following actions will occur:

Notifications

The veterinarian will notify the:

- Chairman of Stewards or event organiser and
- NSW DPI on Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline – phone 1800675888

Department of Primary Industries (DPI) will notify:

- NSW Health and
- NSW Police (to request assistance to retain animals at ground).

If Hendra virus is confirmed, it is recommended the Chairman of Stewards or event organiser notifies their peak industry body.

Sampling and laboratory testing of the suspect horse

The veterinarian will collect samples and liaise with the Hotline veterinarian for prompt submission and testing at the nearest suitable laboratory.

Management of a suspect horse

A person wearing full PPE will move the horse to the designated isolation area or move other animals and people away from the suspect horse.

1. Entry points to the isolation area should be:
 - a. Locked,
 - b. taped off or
 - c. a person assigned to warn the public or competitors that they must not enter.
2. All people who handle or come within 5 metres of the horse must wear appropriate PPE.
3. The horse must be kept in isolation until the testing results are known.
4. The horse should be regularly observed from a distance of at least 5 metres to monitor its welfare and assess the possible need for euthanasia.

Anyone who has potentially had contact with the suspect horse, including owners or managers, riders and strappers, stewards, judges, and officials should wash their hands and other exposed skin, shower and change into clean clothing. Contaminated clothing should be stored double bagged in a plastic bag until it can be machine washed.

Euthanasia

If the horse is to be euthanased (Hendra virus confirmed or on welfare grounds prior to receiving results):

- it must be euthanased on the premises
- euthanasia should be conducted in an area that is screened from public viewing
- euthanasia should preferably occur in an open area easily accessed by large equipment to minimise risk to operators disposing of the carcase
- it may be euthanased in a stable if it is too ill to be safely walked out and/or it is impossible to screen an area from public viewing
- the carcase should be covered e.g. with a weighted tarpaulin
- quarantine tape should be erected to exclude entry to the area 10 metres from the horse carcase
- the carcase should not be moved until the test result is known
- DPI will arrange for carcase transport and disposal in accordance with the [Procedure – Transport of Carcasses and Contaminated Material](#) if the carcase or if the horse is confirmed to be infected.

Quarantine of the site

The event organisers should immediately close the site entry and exit points and ask the competitors to comply with a voluntary quarantine.

The site will be formally quarantined under section 35 of the *Animal Diseases (Emergency Outbreaks) Act 1991* as soon as is practicable after DPI is notified of the suspect Hendra virus case.

If Hendra virus is confirmed all areas contaminated by the infected horse will be off limits to animals or people not wearing PPE until 10 days have passed, or until the area is decontaminated.

Movement permits

No animals will be allowed to leave the event until an individual risk assessment has been completed, the contact details for the owner recorded, and a movement permit issued by an inspector.

Risk assessment of contaminated land

The event organisers should identify where the suspect horse has been held in the period from three days prior to the onset of clinical signs and what equipment at the event may have been contaminated with fluids or waste from the horse in this period.

Land within 5 metres of where the horse has been located for more than two hours, or within 5 metres of land highly contaminated with bodily fluids/stable waste, is high risk. Animals and people must be moved out of this area and it must be taped off to prevent entry except by people wearing PPE.

Land within 5 metres of where the horse has walked through or been located for less than two hours is medium risk. It is recommended that animals and people are moved out of this area and it is taped off to prevent entry.

Other land will be designated as low risk.

All risk areas should be clearly recorded on a map of the site. The map will be used to assist in assessing the potential exposure of animals on the site to infection.

Risk Assessment of contaminated equipment

All equipment which may have been contaminated by body fluids from the suspect horse is high risk. It must be decontaminated by isolation for ten days or by disinfection in accordance with [AUSVETPLAN Operational Procedures Manual, Decontamination](#)

All high risk equipment should be listed to identify animals that may be at risk by direct contact with the high risk equipment.

Identification of potentially exposed people

Record name and contact details of anyone who has been in close contact with the suspect horse. This record will be provided to NSW Health.

If Hendra virus is confirmed people who have been in close contact with the horse should be advised to contact NSW Health or their doctor promptly

Risk assessment of horses

The potential exposure of all animals at the event to Hendra virus must be assessed and classified as low, medium or high risk. Restrictions will be applied according to the risk classification.

Assessment information should be collected using the attached form (Hendra virus horse exposure assessment form). The event organiser may commence this prior to the arrival of the inspector.

High exposure horses

High exposure horses have had close contact with the suspect horse in the 3 days before or after it became sick. This includes those horses:

- located within 5 metres of the suspect horse for more than 2 hours
- that had nose to nose contact with the suspect horse
- that were held in an area likely to be heavily contaminated with body fluids or waste from the suspect horse
- that were transported with the suspect horse
- that shared equipment e.g. bridles or feed buckets with the suspect horse, or
- that had the same strapper/ handler as the suspect horse.

Restrictions on high exposure horses

Horses considered at high risk will be retained at the premises until the results of testing are known. They can be held either in individual isolation or in isolated group/s.

If the suspect horse is positive the high exposure horses will continue to be retained at the site if possible. If they are retained at the site the quarantine will be modified to only cover the area occupied by the high exposure horses and the area contaminated by the positive horse.

If it is impossible to retain the high exposure horses at the site they will be allowed to return to their property of origin or other suitable place under conditions set out in a permit.

An inspector must be satisfied that the horse can be adequately isolated at the destination property. The property will be inspected and quarantined.

Any high exposure horses remaining on the site will be quarantined until they have had 3 negative Hendra tests, the last collected 32 days after they were last exposed to the positive horse. During this period they will be monitored twice a day and may only be handled by people wearing appropriate PPE.

Medium exposure horses

Medium exposure horses are those that had limited exposure to the suspect horse including those horses:

- located 5 -10 metres from the suspect horse for more than 2 hours, or
- that came within 5 metres of the suspect horse when in a marshalling yard, competing against or training with the suspect horse, *before it showed clinical signs of illness.*

Restrictions on medium exposure horses

Horses considered medium risk will be allowed to return to their property of origin or other suitable place under conditions specified in a permit. An inspector must be satisfied that the horse can be adequately isolated at the destination property. The property will be inspected and quarantined.

These animals must be kept in isolation either individually or as a group. They will be tested for Hendra virus 16 days after their last contact with the positive horse. The health of the horse must be checked twice a day. People handling the horse should maintain a high level of hygiene.

Low exposure horses

Low exposure horses have not been exposed to the suspect horse.

Restrictions on low exposure horses

Low exposure horses will be allowed to leave the premises following issuing of a permit. The health of the horse must be checked for signs of illness for the next 16 days and DPI should be advised immediately if the animal becomes unwell.

Other susceptible animals

Cats, dogs, pigs, ferrets, guinea pigs and rabbits may be infected with Hendra virus. If these animals are at the event they require the same risk assessment as horses.

Any of these animals that were known or suspected to have eaten waste or tissue from a suspect horse, is high risk.

These animals will be considered on a case by case basis, but are likely to be allowed to return home with their owner, provided high and medium risk animals can be isolated and monitored. High and medium risk animals will also be quarantined and tested.

Notification of test results from the suspect horse.

DPI will advise the event organiser of the result of the suspect horse tests. The event organisers are responsible for notifying these results to all people who brought horses to the event.

Advice to owners/managers of event venues

Event organisers should provide the owners / managers of the event venue with a copy of this guideline.

Further information on holding a horse event is available from the [Primary Industries Factsheet 'Horse events: Biosecurity guidelines for organisers and competitors'](#).

Acknowledgement

This Factsheet contains the Hendra virus risk exposure assessment form, developed by Biosecurity Queensland.

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (September 2011). 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 the Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.

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Hendra virus horse exposure assessment form

1 Animal and owner/person in charge details

Horse ID (name, chip etc.):

Stable number:

Complete horse identification sheet (see next page) for each horse in consignment

PIC of origin:

Owner name:

Owner's address:

Mobile phone:

Email address:

Person in charge of horse (if different to above):

Address of person in charge:

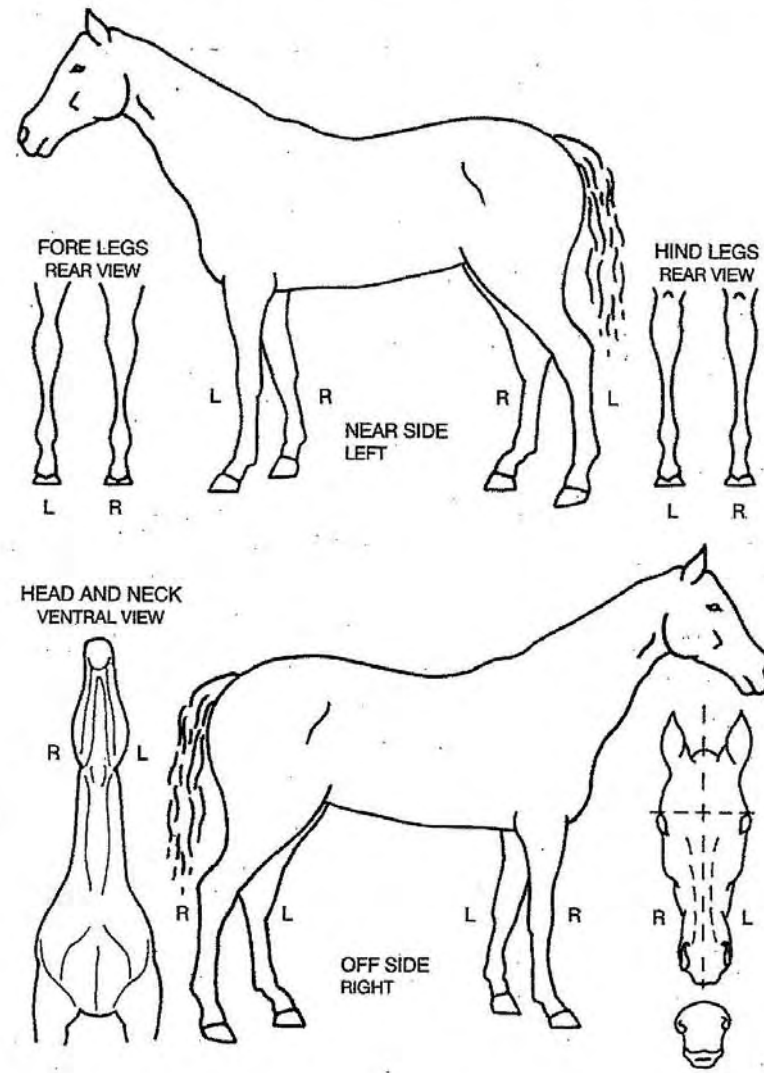
Mobile phone

Email address:

Hendra Virus Response (Location*)

Registered NAME (if any)		YEAR OF BIRTH	
Owner		COLOUR	
Owner Address		SEX	
MICROCHIP NUMBER			
BRANDS	Near Side		Off Side
NECK STRAP NUMBER			
OTHER INFORMATION (Stable Name, Healthy/Sick etc)			
Signature	Date / /		
Name of Inspector/Vet-			
Place of examination-			

INFECTED PREMISES HORSE IDENTIFICATION



Note: If reliable identification of the horse (eg microchip number) is available, full horse description does not need to be provided.

2 Property details

Property address of origin:																					
PIC of proposed destination:																					
Property address of proposed destination:																					
Security considerations (fences, roads, gates) at destination property																					
Number of horses on destination property:																					
Can horses be segregated/isolated by a distance of at least 5 metres from horse returning from event?																					
Can isolated horses be managed as a biosecure unit (i.e. – can the horse(s) be managed independently of other animal with no potential for cross-over of pathogens through direct or indirect contact?)																					
Does neighbouring property(s) have horses?																					
Distance from neighbouring horses?																					
Information regarding neighbours with horses (if available)	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Name</th> <th>Address</th> <th>Contact phone</th> <th># of horses</th> <th>Degree of contact (direct/indirect/ frequency)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Name	Address	Contact phone	# of horses	Degree of contact (direct/indirect/ frequency)															
	Name	Address	Contact phone	# of horses	Degree of contact (direct/indirect/ frequency)																
Additional information:																					

2.1 Map of the proposed destination property (with fences, boundaries, neighbours, buildings and landforms identified. Approximate distances



3 Movements to and within event grounds

Date arrived at event grounds:

Stable numbers animal housed at:

Description of movements of horse whilst at the event (e.g. times horse may have moved from the stable to the warm up area, event arena, wash bays etc. Be specific and account for the entire time the horse is on the grounds. Account for the laneways the animal may have travelled on and what stable blocks it may have been through)

4 Supplementary information (provided by owner/person in charge)

- Stable map
- Horse identification sheet (complete a Hendra virus horse identification sheet for each animal in the consignment), or other reliable horse identification information
- Copy of waybill

5 Exposure assessment

Is the horse currently healthy?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
Has the horse come into close contact ¹ with the Hendra virus?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsure
Has the horse come within 5 metres of a live HeV suspect/positive horse but not known to have direct contact with the suspect/positive horse?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsure
Can the owner confirm no exposure to the HeV suspect positive horse, contaminated area ² or contaminated fomites?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsure

¹ Direct contact with live HeV suspect/positive horse(s) including 3 days preceding the horse showing clinical signs; Contact with the carcass of a suspect/positive HeV horse from the day of death to day of death plus 5 days; Direct contact with body fluids (including nasopharyngeal discharges, urine, blood) or faeces from a HeV suspect/positive horse 10 days preceding the horse demonstrating showing clinical signs and within a time period deemed to have viable virus; Direct contact with potentially contaminated fomites (e.g. tack/equipment) from a HeV suspect/positive horse 10 days preceding the horse demonstrating clinical signs and within a time period deemed to have viable virus

² Contaminated area - for stables/yards, any area that has confined a HeV positive horse where possible contamination from body fluids has occurred

6 Initial exposure assessment

To be completed by DPI/LHPA staff	
Date of assessment:	
Time of assessment:	
Property management plan complete?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Assessment completed by:	
Reviewing officer:	
Permit/order #:	
Appropriate delegation held by inspector?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Issuing inspector:	
Date permit/order issued:	
Time permit/order issued:	
Date departed event grounds:	
Initial exposure assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
Recommended property status of destination:	<input type="checkbox"/> DCP <input type="checkbox"/> TP <input type="checkbox"/> AN <input type="checkbox"/> Nil
Quarantine recommended?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Follow up action required?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Specific biosecurity advice required and provided?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No