
14 June 2013

Hendra vaccination

Horse owners and managers are strongly encouraged to vaccinate their horses against Hendra virus. **It 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.

The vaccine is currently available under a limited permit and must be administered by a veterinarian. With over 30,000 doses administered across Australia to date, current data indicates that the vaccine is safe and side effects minimal.

Contact your veterinarian for further details about the vaccine.

Hendra Virus confirmed near Macksville

An unvaccinated 12 year old Anglo Arabian mare was found dead on a 110 hectare property North West of Macksville on the Mid North coast on July 5th 2013. The mare had been observed grazing earlier in the day by its owners and appeared normal.

The owner contacted the local Livestock Health and Pest Authority office in Kempsey and the District Veterinarian visited the property the next morning and collected blood and swabs for Hendra virus testing. The samples tested positive for Hendra virus infection at the State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at Menangle.

The property has been quarantined and the dead horse buried. There is one other horse on the property and it is currently healthy. It has now been vaccinated against Hendra by the veterinarian. As well as protecting animals from getting Hendra virus infection, vaccination has also been shown to reduce shedding in animals infected by Hendra virus making them less infectious. This horse as well as three dogs and two cats have all been tested for evidence of exposure to the virus and all have returned negative results to the initial tests. Further testing and daily monitoring will be carried out on these animals before the property will be released from the quarantine. All the animals remain well.

NSW Health advises that three family members and a vet were assessed for potential exposure to the infectious horse. None had any exposure of concern.

Biosecurity precautions

As no vaccine is 100 per cent effective, and because horses are susceptible to a range of viruses, it is important that vets and others in contact with sick horses continue to protect themselves by using gloves, masks and eye protection, and carefully wash their hands after contact with sick animals.

If your horse is sick or dies always seek veterinary advice. The recent Hendra case in Macksville and the Lyssavirus cases in horses in Queensland last month both highlight the value of veterinary investigations of sick or dead horses. Keep contact (human and other animals) with sick or dead animals to a minimum and maintain good hygiene.

Further Information

See the DPI website:

- [Press release on use of vaccine](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/news/all/2013/owners-encouraged-to-vaccinate-their-horses-against-hendra) at <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/news/all/2013/owners-encouraged-to-vaccinate-their-horses-against-hendra> or
- [Hendra virus web page](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/horses/health/general/hendra-virus) at <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/horses/health/general/hendra-virus>.

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (14 June 2013). 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.