

7 July 2011

Hendra virus confirmed at Macksville

A horse from a property near Macksville on the NSW Mid Coast was confirmed to be infected with Hendra virus on 6 July 2011.

The horse, a 16 year old thoroughbred mare appeared normal until late on Friday, when she was noticed to be depressed. Early on Saturday morning she went through several fences, appeared blind, and was head-pressing. She was found dead early on Sunday morning.

The dead horse and its companion, a 16 year old gelding, were sampled by the Livestock Health and Pest Authority District Veterinarian. The sample collected from the companion animal tested negative for Hendra.

The dead horse has been buried on the property.

There is a fig tree in the mare's paddock, but no known bat colonies nearby. Bats are seen occasionally.

The property has been placed in quarantine and is being managed by the Department of Primary Industries and the Mid Coast Livestock Health and Pest Authority. Staff from the Department are continuing to work closely with NSW Health and government authorities in Queensland.

This incident is not linked to the other recent case in NSW and the recent cases in Queensland.

The affected horse had not moved off the property in the last 32 days.

Restrictions are in place on the quarantined property and apply to the movement of horses and other items onto and off the property. In addition to the companion horse, two other horses on the property are being monitored.

The risk to neighbouring horses is being assessed.

Public health unit staff have interviewed six people, including the attending veterinarian who have been identified as having had contact with the infected horse to assess their level of exposure.

Hendra virus at Wollongbar

Negative Hendra virus results have been received from the companion horse sampled on the property quarantined in the Wollongbar area.

The Department of Primary Industries and the North Coast Livestock Health and Pest Authority are continuing to manage, in conjunction with the horse owners, continue to closely monitor all horses relating to the Beaudesert incident. All horses appear clinically normal.

Presentation of current Hendra cases

The initial presentation of some recent Hendra virus cases have included signs consistent with possible colic including, depression, pyrexia, congested mucous membranes and collapse. Rapid deterioration including neurological signs has been a feature of several cases.

Reminder on Hendra sampling protocols

Veterinarians are reminded that the following samples should be submitted from a horse suspected to be infected with Hendra:

- 10 mL of LiHep blood in evacuated tubes for PCR testing and

- 10 mL of clotted blood and
- Swabs from each nasal cavity pooled in PBGS or 2ml of saline if no transport media available.

Note oral or rectal swabs may also be collected.

Fresh submandibular lymph nodes or blood clots may be collected from dead horses.

Sampling media is available from the [the State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory \(SDVL\)](http://www.veterinary.nsw.gov.au) on virology.enquiries@industry.nsw.gov.au, 02 4640 6337 or 02 4640 6377. The media may be stored in the freezer until required. Alternatively if media is required at short notice, please contact your local LHPA.

PPE

Veterinarians are reminded of the importance of appropriate PPE when examining and treating horses. The most recent version of the Guidelines for Veterinarians handling potential Hendra virus infection in horses (Version 4.1) is available at the website www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au. This information was written for Queensland vets but the principles are applicable wherever there is a risk of Hendra virus infection.

Notification of suspect Hendra

Report all suspected cases in horses to the local Livestock Health and Pest Authority, an inspector with the Department of Primary Industries, or the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

General Recommendations to veterinarians

Hendra virus could potentially occur wherever there are fruit bats.

Veterinarians are urged to review their Hendra virus case investigation procedures, infection control protocols and client communication resources.

Veterinarians should develop, train in and implement infection control procedures to manage the risks associated with working with sick horses.

Infection control procedures are the primary defense against horses in the pre-clinical phase where they may excrete Hendra virus but still appear clinically normal.

Where Hendra virus is a differential diagnosis, veterinarians should provide sound advice to horse owners to reduce their potential exposure, until a negative test result is returned.

General advice to horse owners on protecting themselves and their horse from Hendra is available at: <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/horses/health/general/hendra-virus#Information-for-horse-owners>.

Further information

Further information on Hendra including advice on sampling and information for clients may be found at:

- <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/horses/health/general/hendra-virus/vets>
- <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/animal/info-vets> and
- <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/horses/health/general/hendra-virus>

Contact your GP, local Emergency Department or local Public Health Unit if you have concerns about possible exposure of people to a horse with Hendra virus infection. Contact details for NSW Public Health Units are available at: <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/Infectious/phus.asp>

Information on the current situation in Queensland may be found at http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/4790_2900.htm.

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (7 July 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 NSW Department Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.