



## HENDRA VIRUS UPDATE

### Fast Facts for horse owners, their families and those who come into contact with horses

1. Hendra Virus is a sporadic disease of horses
2. Hendra Virus is caused by a spillover of virus from flying foxes
3. Hendra Virus infection in humans is rare, however it can prove fatal. Hendra can be spread from Bats to Horses and then potentially to humans.
4. Hendra Virus in humans is caused by high level of exposure to blood, tissues and respiratory secretions from an infected horse. The virus can survive for up to 4 days outside of bats & horses.
5. Most common disinfectants can kill Hendra virus outside of bats, thus hand and skin washing regularly reduces risk of Humans contracting the virus.
6. To date since 1994 there has been 80 known Hendra Virus horse fatalities with more than 30 of those deaths recorded in 2011 & 2012.
7. There have been seven confirmed cases of Hendra Virus infections in humans with 4 resulting in death
8. Hendra Virus can cause a range of clinical signs in horses, and should be considered when there is a rapid onset of illness, fever, increased heart rate and rapid deterioration associated with respiratory and / or neurological signs
9. Hendra Virus season in SE QLD & Nth NSW is generally recognised to be from **June -August, however the risk may be present all year round.**

### Risk

The seriousness of Hendra Virus requires Workplace Health & Safety measures to be implemented where there is contact with horses, their blood, tissues and body fluids.

### Preventative measures

Sound hygiene and biosecurity measures should be adopted

- Wash hands & exposed body parts regularly with soap & water, especially after contact with horses and associated equipment contaminated with horses body fluids
- Cover cuts and abrasions with a water resistant dressing
- Maintain yards and stables in a clean and hygienic condition
- Clean and disinfect equipment that has been in contact with horse's blood or body fluids
- Wear PPE (personal protective equipment) appropriate for the level of contact (gloves, long sleeve shirts, long pants, EYE Protection)
- Manage accidental contamination with horse blood or body fluids
- Wash with water & soap, if no water available wipe area clean & use alcohol based hand rub.
- If exposure is to a cut, gently encourage bleeding and wash area with soap & water
- If eyes contaminated gently but thoroughly rinse open eyes with water or saline for at least 30 seconds
- If body fluids get in mouth, spit out fluid and rinse mouth with water several times
- Prevent sharing of water troughs by horses at events
- Wash, clean and disinfect transporters used to move horses
- Limit physical contact between horses
- Ensure all horses are handled by owners or their representatives only.
- Seek medical advice from a doctor or the local

### Biosecurity

Limit interaction between flying foxes and horses if applicable

- Remove feed and water containers from under trees and place under shelter
- Remove horses from paddocks where flowering or fruiting trees may attract flying foxes
- If not possible consider fencing off flowering or fruiting trees
- Clear fallen fruit or fruit debris from under trees.

## Planning for potential Hendra Virus cases

- Isolate any sick horse from other horses, animals & people and contact a vet
- Avoid close contact with any sick horse where possible. Consider the horses blood or respiratory fluid as potentially infectious and take the following precautions
  1. Cover cuts and abrasions
  2. Use PPE to protect clothing, exposed skin and face from contact eg overalls, gloves, gumboots, glasses / goggles/ face shield.
  3. Prepare a readily accessible PPE kit as well as hand cleaners, disinfectant and waste bags
  4. After handling the horse, remove and dispose of PPE carefully to avoid contamination.
  5. Perform hand hygiene immediately after contact with sick horse
  6. Arrange activities so contact with the sick horse is last
- If Vet suspects Hendra avoid close contact with sick horse and other in contact animals whilst awaiting test results
- Where possible move suspect horses away from areas accessible by public
- Follow instructions for biosecurity and personal safety provided by your Vet
- Notify suspected Hendra Virus cases by contacting the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888 or your local LHPA office

Seek medical advice if you or a worker has had contact with a horse suspected or confirmed as being infected with Hendra Virus

## Vaccination

Equivac HeV is a vaccine launched in November 2012, to aid in the fight against the Hendra Virus, and is available to be administered by accredited vets. The vaccine interrupts the cycle of Hendra transmission from flying foxes to the horse and thus from horse to human. Equivac HeV provides benefits for horse welfare and for human health

Equivac HeV is a subunit vaccine and so **cannot** cause the clinical disease. Live virus is not used at any stage of production

Vaccination can be administered to foals over the age of 4 months. However consult your vet

PLEASE consult your Vet for further details in relation to vaccination

A primary vaccination must be followed up with a secondary vaccination 21 to 42 days after initial vaccination. Onset immunity will occur 21 days after the secondary vaccination. A booster vaccination is required every six months.

A vaccinated horse will receive a microchip to identify it as a vaccinated horse

