

Note to the horse-owning community

1. Horses and the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement

The horse disease response levy bills that we have collectively worked towards for the past two years have this week been introduced to Parliament. This marks a new milestone in the collaborative effort to see the horse-owning community protected in the event of an emergency disease that affects horses.

On Thursday 3 March 2011, at Parliament House, representatives of four national organisations (Australian Racing Board, Harness Racing Australia, Australian Horse Industry Council and Equestrian Australia) signed the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA) on behalf of the Australian horse-owning community.

The EADRA is an agreement between government and industry on how to manage the cost and responsibility for an emergency response to an animal disease outbreak. It is a formal and legally binding document. It is an agreement between Animal Health Australia, the Australian Government, all state and territory governments and livestock industry signatories (or 'Parties').

For all horse owners, the EADRA provides the reassurance that the Commonwealth will supply immediate funding to enable rapid, decisive action to be taken in the event of an emergency disease outbreak. It was agreed, during 18 months of active consultation with the horse-owning community, that industry's share of a response would be repaid via a levy on manufactured feeds and worm treatments. A bill to legislate this levy collection mechanism is currently before parliament. Such a levy will only be triggered after a disease response is required; until that happens, no money will be collected.

Information about the horse disease response levy bills is available from the Australian Parliament website, www.aph.gov.au: click on 'Bills', 'Bills before parliament' and then search for 'horses'. Information about Horses and the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement is available at www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au. Simply click on the 'Horses and the EADRA' button on the home page.

2. A note on the Hendra virus cases in Queensland and New South Wales

We understand the current cases of Hendra virus in Queensland and New South Wales are causing horse owners considerable concern.

Hendra virus causes an acute and rapidly fatal viral pneumonia in horses. It has also caused pneumonia and encephalitic disease in humans. The disease has proven to be only mildly contagious outside its natural hosts but the exact method of spread of the virus is unknown.

Information about current cases and appropriate biosecurity measures should be obtained from the New South Wales Government website, www.dpi.nsw.gov.au, and the Queensland Government website, www.dpi.qld.gov.au; simply follow the Hendra links on both pages. They are managing the responses at this time and will have the latest available information.