

## Equine Veterinarians Australia Alert

HRNSW advises that the Equine Veterinarians Australia (EVA) have provided alerts in relation to:

1. **Confirmed Hendra Positive in Newcastle NSW;**
2. **Update on Sudden Horse Deaths in Victoria.**

### Confirmed Hendra Positive in Newcastle NSW

On Saturday night (15th July) a veterinarian attended a horse unvaccinated for Hendra virus that was unwell. The clinical signs were injected mucous membranes, pyrexia, inappetence, bilateral nasal discharge, and mild neurological signs.

The horse died on Sunday and was confirmed to be PCR positive to Hendra virus on Tuesday evening July 18th. The detection of the virus was confirmed through testing at NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute. This is the first confirmed detection of Hendra virus in NSW since October 2021. The DPI and Local Land Services (LLS) are working with the private veterinarians, Hunter New England Health, and the owners.

Signs of infection can be non-specific in the early stages and anyone who is concerned about possible Hendra infection should isolate the horse and seek veterinary advice. Veterinarians should use appropriate PPE and advise clients to avoid contact with their horses until Hendra exclusion results are obtained.

There have now been 67 confirmed outbreak incidents in Australia, including 25 horse deaths in NSW as a result of Hendra virus on 24 properties, since the first case in 2006. There have been no human deaths from Hendra virus in NSW.

Hendra virus infection has the potential to affect both horses and humans. It has the potential to be life threatening. The natural hosts of Hendra virus are fruit bats (flying foxes), which have the potential to pass the infection to horses via their faeces and bodily fluids. Human infection can arise given exposure to the blood, bodily fluids and tissues of an infected horse. There is no evidence to date to support the spread of disease from human to human or bat to human. There is, however, evidence of spread from horse to horse, following the exposure to the secretions of an infected horse.

Signs of Hendra Virus infection in horses include:

- Acute onset of illness
- Increased body temperature
- Increased heart rate
- Discomfort/ weight shifting between legs
- Depression
- Rapid deterioration of well-being and clinical signs

The NSW Department of Primary Industries has provided the following advice for horse owners:

1. Horse owners are encouraged to vaccinate horses for Hendra

Virus;

2. Horse paddocks containing fruiting or flowering trees (or other trees that attract bats) should be fenced off so horses do not camp under them;
3. Horse feed and water containers should be located under cover away from bat faecal and spat contamination;
4. Isolate sick horses from humans and other animals and wear personal protective equipment if required to handle a sick horse.

Owners of horses in at risk areas are strongly advised to contact their veterinarian as vaccination remains the single most effective method of preventing infection from this deadly disease.

Fact sheets on Hendra Virus are available online at:

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/horses/health-and-disease/hendra-virus/hendra>

[https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/hendra\\_virus.aspx](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/hendra_virus.aspx)

**To report any suspicion of Hendra virus infection, contact your veterinarian or ring the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.**

**Harness Racing NSW Stewards should also be contacted on 02 9722 6600.**

#### **Update on Sudden Horse Deaths in Victoria.**

There are 13 'reported' sudden death cases from 5 separate properties. The number of deaths per property varies between one and five deaths. These properties are not in close proximity to each other (at least 30km apart) with properties around the Mornington Peninsula (1), Cranbourne (2), Ballarat, and Colac.

There have not been any consistent clinical signs, the horses have been clinically normal and then suffered sudden death. The first case of the 13 cases occurred on July 4th 2023.

Agriculture Victoria is the lead agency investigating this event. It is critical that they receive notification and appropriate sample collection from any new cases. All the information that you need regarding sample collection is provided in the [link from Agriculture Victoria's Advice to Vets](#). Please wear appropriate PPE.

**Please contact the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888 if you attend a horse/s that and you are concerned it may form part of this investigation.**

Current and further updates will be available on the [Agriculture Victoria website](#).

HRNSW advises trainers and veterinarians to remain vigilant in monitoring horses for signs of illness and disease.

In particular:

- All industry participants are asked to contact their local veterinarian immediately if they have a case/s of sudden death or any sudden onset of illness in any of their horses, including non-Standardbreds.
- Precautions should also be taken when attending acutely ill or dead horses, including using full PPE (gumboots, overalls and gloves, safety eyewear and P2 respirator masks).

For further information on this matter contact:  
The HRNSW Integrity Department  
(02) 9722 6655

*Harness Racing NSW (HRNSW) is the controlling body for harness racing in New South Wales with responsibility for commercial and regulatory management of the industry including 33 racing clubs across the State. HRNSW is headed by a Board of Directors and is independent of Government.*

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