

31st August, 2007

HEVC Equine Influenza Update

As many of our clients may already be aware, our clinic had some confirmed positive equine influenza tests from our hospital barn on Wednesday 29th August.

To avoid all the conjecture and innuendo in the community we would like to state the facts and reinforce the measures that have been put in place to minimize any risk to our clientele and the horse community.

On Thursday 23rd August, a horse came to our clinic for a routine procedure for a broken tooth. Unbeknown to us, this horse had been in contact with horses at the eventing show at Maitland.

When the announcement was made about the equine influenza outbreak on Saturday 25th August and the lockdown was put in place, we immediately put our hospital into self imposed quarantine due to this possible link which now had become apparent. We were initially confident that we would not be affected as the horse was not admitted to the hospital and went home after the procedure. The strict quarantine conditions we immediately set in place had been stringently adhered to for several days even before any symptoms were evident. Unfortunately due to the obviously highly contagious nature of this virus, some hospital horses started to show signs on Tuesday 28th August. They were immediately tested and as soon as results were confirmed the following day, we immediately contacted all surrounding neighbours and the Hawkesbury Race Club.

We have been in close liaison with the DPI at all times and in fact they have complimented us on our proactive & responsible approach to the situation and the quarantine procedure we had already put in place. The DPI considered us a low risk due to our early quarantine procedures and the fact that all cases were isolated within our hospital barn both prior to and since the outbreak and are already almost fully recovered.

Our vets in the field are still able to operate under the guidelines of the shut down & are using protective clothing and disinfecting techniques, both on entering and exiting every property, as recommended by the DPI for any infectious disease outbreak. We have divided our vets into "Dirty" and "Clean" so that no affected or unaffected property is put at any additional risk.

Our front office remains open and we can assure you there is minimal risk from the office or car park.

Unfortunately the virus seems to be continuing to spread rapidly throughout the district. It is being not only spread by horse to horse contact, but there is also an air born element to it as well which is going to make it very difficult to contain.

Rest assured, we as a practice have taken a very responsible approach and put in place measures both at the hospital and with our vets in the field that no client will be put in any added risk from the virus by our practice.

We must all work together and help the DPI track the spread of the virus by notifying them of outbreaks and getting horses tested. If people go underground and try to avoid detection, the whole process is only going to take longer to resolve itself or in fact may get totally out of control. We urge people to be vigilant in the shut down of your property, and in your biosecurity protection techniques, monitoring your horse's temperature and looking out for any coughs or running noses. If you suspect you have a case especially if you are in an area where there have been confirmed cases. Please contact us so we can advise you and test your horse and treat if necessary.

We strongly believe that you have a moral and ethical responsibility to notify all your surrounding neighbours if you are unfortunate enough that you have a confirmed case of Equine Influenza.

John Parbery & Tony Drew