

17th September, 2007

Equine Influenza Update

The Equine Influenza epidemic continues to spread throughout the Hawkesbury, Hills and now the Lower Blue Mountains districts, with hundreds of properties and thousands of horses being affected.

The symptoms are fairly classic and most horses will exhibit a combination of one or more of these characteristics.

- an elevated temperature (greater than 38.5 °C)
- horses appear lethargic & depressed & can be off their feed
- nasal discharge (ranging from a clear trickle to a thick yellow/green discharge)
- a distinctive hacking cough

The majority of horses seem to be coping quite well with the flu, with the more severe symptoms resolving within 24 to 48 hours. However certain groups such as older horses, young foals and debilitated horses are at greater risk of developing secondary bacterial infections and should be monitored more closely.

The classic temperature spike often is more pronounced in the evening and should be treated with Phenylbutazone in consultation with your Veterinarian. Do not use bute unless your horse actually has a temperature.

Flu symptoms can last for up to 1 to 3 weeks and horses having contracted flu should be rested for about a month. Avoid any stress and let them rest and recuperate. Keep all conditions as normal as possible, including rugging as usual providing you have treated the elevated temperature.

If any horse continues to remain febrile and unwell for more than a couple of days, you should consult your vet and they may need to be reassessed or put onto supportive medication.

The DPI have now changed their stance on routine Flu Testing and are no longer insisting on every new property being tested. If you are in a hot spot (with many locally confirmed cases) it is only necessary to report your property to the DPI on the hotline number 1800675888. If you are in a newer location, they would still like a flu test to be done to help track the spread. If your business involves the horse industry & revolves around your property, it may be advisable to obtain a positive Flu test on your property to support any potential later claim for compensation.

However, if you are at all concerned about your horses or your horses are not coping very well with the flu, please contact the clinic and we can arrange a visit where we can examine them individually and advise you on how to best manage your cases.

Once you have a confirmed case of EI on your property you will be contacted by the DPI who will advise you about quarantine conditions.

Our office is open from 8am - 6pm Monday to Friday and 8am - 12pm on Saturdays, should you require any advice or need to come in to purchase any required medication.

We continue to work closely with the DPI and in fact have been doing some research and extra testing of our cases in the hospital as a means of helping them determine how long flu cases remain infectious and when they in fact start to produce antibodies within their system.

We are committed to helping all our clients as best we can and will keep you informed of any changes in the situation.

HEVC