

Hendra virus

Biosecurity information for equestrian events

Hendra virus can cause serious disease and you have obligations under the Biosecurity Act 2014 to manage the risk.

Contact the event veterinarian immediately if you suspect a horse may have Hendra virus infection.

Veterinarians that suspect Hendra virus infection should follow standard procedures to investigate the situation.

If you become aware of the presence of Hendra virus infection in any species of animal, you must report it to Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or contact the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888.

General biosecurity obligation

If you are an event organiser or competitor at an equestrian event, you have a legal obligation (general biosecurity obligation (GBO)) to take all reasonable and practical measures to prevent or minimise the effects of a biosecurity risk.

Hendra virus poses a serious biosecurity risk. This means as an event organiser or competitor you are legally required to reduce the risk of Hendra virus infection and limit the spread of Hendra virus when dealing with horses and other possible carriers (such as contaminated equipment) at an event.

Both event organisers and competitors must have an understanding of their individual responsibilities at an event. The actions that are considered reasonable and practical will vary depending on your role at an equestrian event.



You can meet your GBO by:

- understanding your role at an equestrian event and what is required of you
- reducing the risk of Hendra virus infection
- preventing or limiting the spread of Hendra virus infection.

More information on Hendra virus can be found at: business.qld.gov.au

Event organisers/committees

Event organisers are responsible for preparing a biosecurity plan. The biosecurity measures that have been put in place should be recorded in the plan and made available to all committee members and competitors.

Event organisers should also:

- set event entry requirements to reduce the risk of introducing Hendra virus infection (and other infectious diseases/pests)
- ensure that appropriate processes, facilities and equipment are available to manage suspected or confirmed Hendra virus infection.

For more information on developing an event biosecurity plan go to: business.qld.gov.au.

Competitors

The responsibility for good biosecurity practices starts with horse owners/competitors at home and should be carried over to any events or outings you take your horse to.

Competitors should understand and abide by the event biosecurity plan implemented by the event organisers.

Competitors should also:

- not knowingly take sick horses to an event
- comply with event entry requirements set by the committee to reduce the risk of introducing Hendra virus infection (and other infectious diseases/pests)
- comply with any directions by event organisers during the event
- manage your horse at the event to reduce potential transfer of Hendra virus infection.

Record keeping

It is a legal requirement for both competitors and event organisers to record horse movements. These records are an important source of information and can assist in tracing disease spread and source if an emergency animal disease occurs.

Event committees must keep a record of all horses that attend an event and keep them for two years.

The following details must be captured:

- details of the place that the horse came from and the name and address of the person that was responsible for the horse before arriving at the event
- details of the place the horse is being moved to and the name and address of the person that will receive the horse after the event
- description of horse
- date of the event
- when the horse arrived and left the event.

Event organisers may consider using horse health declarations as an event entry requirement, to declare the current health status of each horse prior to entering the event grounds, and to meet the record requirements (as per dot points above).

Competitors must provide true and accurate information when supplying horse movement records and horse health declarations.

For more information on livestock movement records visit business.qld.gov.au.

Reducing the risk of Hendra virus

Biosecurity measures that can be used to reduce the risk of Hendra virus include the following.

1. Vaccination

A registered Hendra virus vaccine is available for horses. Vaccination of horses is the most effective way to help manage Hendra virus disease.

Vaccination of horses provides a public health and workplace health and safety benefit by reducing the risk of Hendra virus transmission to humans and other susceptible animals.

Whenever Hendra virus infection is suspected, even in vaccinated horses, appropriate biosecurity precautions, including personal

protective equipment (PPE), should be used as no vaccine can provide 100% guaranteed protection.

2. Reduce flying fox and horse interaction

Flying foxes are a natural host of Hendra virus and transmission of Hendra virus infection to horses is believed to occur by horses coming into contact with material contaminated with infected flying fox body fluids and/or excretions.

Options to reduce the likelihood of horses coming into contact with flying foxes or their body fluids/excretions are as follows.

- Remove feed and water containers from under or near trees. If possible, place feed and water containers under shelter.
- Remove horses from areas where flowering/fruited trees may be attracting flying foxes.
- If horses cannot be removed from these areas, consider fencing to restrict access to flowering/fruited trees. Or temporarily remove horses during times of peak flying fox activity (usually at dusk and during the night). Clean up any fruit debris underneath the trees before returning the horses.

Flying foxes should not be targeted for culling. For more information about flying foxes, contact the Department of Environment and Science on 1300 130 372 or visit des.qld.gov.au.

3. Limit horse to horse interaction

It is believed that Hendra virus can be transmitted between horses via direct contact with infectious body fluids, or through indirect contact via equipment contaminated with infectious body fluids.

Competitors should:

- not take horses showing signs of illness to an event
- practice good hygiene when handling horses, including hand washing
- limit direct contact between horses, other animals and the public whilst at an event
- not share equipment such as feed and water containers with other horses
- ensure any tack is cleaned and disinfected before using on different horses.

More information on reducing the risk of Hendra virus infection can be found at business.qld.gov.au

Prevent or limit the spread of Hendra virus

If Hendra virus is suspected or confirmed, event organisers and competitors must do what is reasonable and practical to prevent or limit the spread of infection.

The following activities may prevent or reduce the risk of Hendra virus being transmitted to humans or other animals.

1. Hendra virus notification and testing

Early detection and management of Hendra virus is important to prevent or limit the spread of infection to people and other animals.

Competitors should:

- monitor their horse's health during an event and notify the event organisers of any signs of illness immediately
- notify the on-call veterinarian and follow any advice

The committee should notify all committee members and competitors if Hendra virus is suspected or confirmed at the event.

The on-call veterinarian will make an assessment and determine whether samples need to be taken for testing at a government laboratory. Test results are usually available one working day after the samples are received at the laboratory.

Urgent testing for Hendra virus exclusion may be conducted under certain circumstances. If urgent testing is requested, veterinarians should contact a Biosecurity Queensland duty pathologist or if outside normal business hours contact the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline 1800 675 888.

While waiting for Hendra virus test results, you should take the same level of precaution with suspect horses as you would an infected horse.

More information can be found at: business.qld.gov.au.

2. Isolate suspect or infected horses

Any horse showing signs of Hendra virus infection at an event should be isolated from all other horses, animals and people immediately.

Also:

- Avoid close contact (coming within five metres) with suspect or infected horses (and any body fluids or excretions) and any other

horses or animals that may have been in direct contact with the suspect horse.

- If you must have close contact, appropriate PPE should be used and ensure you handle unaffected animals first and *then* have contact with suspect or infected animals.
- Appropriate facilities to isolate suspect or confirmed infected horses should be available at the event. A minimum distance of five metres, or a barrier such as a full height wall that prevents direct contact, should be maintained. Ensure that the horse cannot be accessed by the public or have close contact with other horses or animals.
- Signage should be used to warn public and competitors not to enter the isolation area.
- Feeding and watering horses while waiting for Hendra virus test results, or once Hendra virus is confirmed, is the competitor's responsibility. Non-essential contact when feeding and watering the horse should be strictly avoided.
- Competitors should observe their horses from a distance and notify the on-call veterinarian immediately of any change in the health status.

If the horse is already deceased or dies while waiting for test results:

- avoid contact with the carcass and ensure it is isolated from other animals, including companion animals and the public
- get advice from your veterinarian or Biosecurity Queensland on carcass management and disposal.





Personal protective equipment and hygiene

If close contact with suspect or confirmed infected horses is essential, ensure that appropriate PPE is worn and a high level of personal hygiene is maintained.

The PPE suitable for use with suspect Hendra virus cases may not be used routinely and it is recommended that PPE is sourced ahead of time and training undertaken in its correct use, storage and maintenance.

Event organisers and competitors should have a PPE kit on hand. Items for PPE kits can include:

- hand cleanser, soap and water (preferably clean, running water)
- detergent
- disinfectant
- impermeable disposable gloves
- water resistant dressing (to cover open wounds)
- overalls (long sleeved and hooded)
- rubber boots
- face shield or safety glasses or goggles
- P2 respirator (particulate respirator), note this is not the same as a dust mask or surgical mask.

When you have finished having contact with the suspect or infected horse:

- Carefully clean any reusable items (e.g. halters, lead ropes, buckets) with detergent and disinfectant.
- Remove remaining PPE carefully to avoid contamination and dispose of it in a plastic bag and seal.
- Wash hands with soap and water after all activities.

For more information on PPE talk to your veterinarian or visit business.qld.gov.au.

Working with Biosecurity Queensland

If a horse is confirmed to be infected with Hendra virus at an equestrian event, Biosecurity Queensland will work with the horse owner and event committee to manage the situation and provide guidance and advice on actions that need to be taken.

It is important to understand that you have a legal obligation to work with Biosecurity Queensland to ensure that Hendra virus infection is managed appropriately on your property.

Human health concerns

If you have concerns about a person's health at any time, seek medical advice. Contact your general practitioner, local hospital emergency department or local public health unit.

For general enquiries about Hendra virus infection in humans, call the Queensland Health hotline on 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84).

Workplace health and safety

A person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) has a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of themselves and workers (e.g. employees, students, trainees, contractors, sub-contractors and volunteers).

The same duty also applies to any other people who may be at risk from work carried out by the business or undertaking (e.g. clients, visitors).

For information call Workplace Health and Safety Queensland on 1300 362 218 or visit worksafe.qld.gov.au.

