

UQ ESH Hendra virus biosecurity procedures and policy

The below standard operating procedure (SOP) has been developed to maximise horse and human health by the clinicians at the UQ ESH based on the current understanding of HeV and current government and regulatory recommendations.

Policy Summary: In order to be admitted to the ESH, a horse must be either vaccinated or have had an exclusion test performed for which there are two avenues as outlined below.

Please note the following Important dates:

- Effective immediately – all emergency admissions must be HeV vaccinated
- October 30th – the below policy will apply but **all costs for on-site exclusion testing** will be covered by the UQ ESH to allow owners time to perform or update HeV vaccination status
- Jan 1st 2018 – the below policy will apply with the costs of on-site exclusion testing being charged to horse owners at cost as a biosecurity fee

Hendra vaccination status

A horse will be deemed to be vaccinated against Hendra virus if it is compliant with current label recommendations for use of the vaccine product registered in Australia (Equivac^RHeV). Hendra vaccination is defined as **yearly vaccination after a set of three initial doses.** The two initial doses are to be administered 21 to 42 days apart and followed by a third dose to be administered 6 months later. Based on current evidence, vaccination can be commenced at **four months of age** and protective serum neutralising antibody levels are achieved 21 days after the second initial dose of vaccine and 7 days after the third initial dose; a horse will be considered **adequately vaccinated from 3 weeks to 6 months after its second initial dose of vaccine and from 1 week to 1 year after the third initial dose of vaccine and after each timely yearly buster.**

Note

- *The University of Queensland supports Hendra vaccination;*
- *Vaccination appears to be the single most effective way of preventing Hendra virus infection in horses. Vaccination is an important measure to prevent equine infection and, as a consequence, provides a public health and workplace health and safety benefit*
- *In vaccine trials, viral shedding was not detected in immunised horses after Hendra virus challenge.*
- *No evidence of Hendra virus replication has been detected in any tissue of vaccinated horses.*

Hendra exclusion testing

Hendra exclusion test is defined as a **negative PCR** performed in the Biosecurity Queensland Coopers Plains Laboratory.

Based on current evidence, samples that can be submitted for Hendra virus exclusion include blood in an EDTA tube **and** a never frozen nasal swab. Because of the incubation period, in order for a non-vaccinated horse to be admitted to the ESH, the above-mentioned samples must have been collected and submitted **less than 48 hours before a scheduled appointment or**

an emergency referral. After sample collection, non-vaccinated horses must be kept indoors from dusk to dawn until the appointment at the ESH.

Admission of cases to UQ ESH

Regular appointments and elective procedures (including farrier appointments)

- **All horses scheduled for an appointment at the Equine Specialist Hospital must be vaccinated against Hendra virus or have had a Hendra virus exclusion test performed on-site or less than 48 hours before admission.**
- Vaccination status of the horse must be verified when the appointment is made. If the horse is not vaccinated against Hendra virus, the policy will be explained in order to obtain the Hendra virus exclusion before the day of the appointment;
- Upon presentation, compliance with the policy must be ascertained before the horse can be unloaded from the float or truck by verification of the vaccination status of the horse in the Hendra virus vaccination registry or by presentation of the results of the Hendra virus exclusion test. If the horse is not registered in the Hendra virus vaccination registry, the referring veterinarian is to be contacted to ascertain vaccination or exclusion;
- **If vaccination or Hendra virus exclusion cannot be demonstrated, the horse will not be admitted directly to the Equine Specialist Hospital and the following options will apply:**
 - **Option 1: The horse enters the UQ ESH (on-site) quarantine facility:**
 - **Horses can only be accepted in the quarantine facility Monday to Friday (working days only);**
 - A physical examination will be performed by personal wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE):
 - If the horse has a normal physical examination, a Hendra virus exclusion test will be performed;
 - If the horse does not have a normal physical examination, the horse will not be accepted in the quarantine facility;
 - In the quarantine facility, **no veterinary care will be provided until the result of the test is known;**
 - If the test is **negative**, the horse will be **accepted** in the Equine Specialist Hospital and fully examined the following **working** day;
 - If the test is **positive**, specific recommendations will be made by **Biosecurity Queensland**
 - The owner will be responsible for the costs associated with testing and boarding **after** January 1st 2018
 - **Option 2: The horse leaves The University of Queensland Gatton Campus:**
 - This option will be taken if:
 - The horse arrives **during a weekend or a holiday;**
 - The horse **needs immediate medical attention.**

Admission of a horse with a Hendra titre level of at least 1:32 or more sampled within the previous month **could be** accepted after discussion with the Equine Internal Medicine Section.

After-hours and emergencies

- Unless a horse is returning to the Equine Specialist Hospital for re-examination of a specific condition, prior evaluation by a general practitioner is compulsory and referral must be organised by the referring veterinarian;
- **All horses referred to the Equine Specialist Hospital must be vaccinated against Hendra virus or have had a Hendra virus exclusion test performed less than 48 hours before being admitted**;
- Vaccination status of the horse must be verified when the referral is made. If the horse is not vaccinated against Hendra virus, the policy will be explained in order to obtain the Hendra virus exclusion before admission;
- Upon presentation, compliance with the policy must be ascertained before the horse can be unloaded from the float or truck by verification of the vaccination status of the horse in the Hendra virus vaccination registry or by presentation of the results of the Hendra virus exclusion test. If the horse is not registered in the Hendra virus vaccination registry, the referring veterinarian is to be contacted to ascertain vaccination;
- **If vaccination or Hendra virus exclusion cannot be demonstrated, the horse will not be admitted to the Equine Specialist Hospital or to the quarantine facility.**

Unexpected arrival of a horse at the Equine Specialist Hospital

- Upon arrival, history must be collected and compliance with the policy must be ascertained before the horse can be unloaded from the float or truck by verification of the vaccination status of the horse in the Hendra virus vaccination registry or by presentation of the results of the Hendra virus exclusion test;
- **If vaccination or Hendra virus exclusion performed less than 48 hours prior cannot be demonstrated, the horse will not be admitted to the Equine Specialist Hospital or to the quarantine facility.**

Foals to be examined at the Equine Specialist Hospital

- Foals from **vaccinated mares** will be accepted up to the age of **6 months** (after 6 months of age, a foal will have to follow the same rules as an adult horse).
- **If vaccination of the mare prior to foaling, or Hendra virus exclusion of both the mare and the foal performed less than 48 hours prior cannot be demonstrated, the foal and the mare will not be admitted to the Equine Specialist Hospital.**
- **The foal and the mare could be admitted to the quarantine facility, unless the foal requires immediate medical attention (which would require transportation to another veterinary hospital).**