

# INFORMATION FOR HORSE OWNERS

## Caring for horses with equine influenza

18 September 2007

Equine influenza, is an acute, highly contagious, viral disease which can cause rapidly spreading outbreaks of respiratory disease in horses and other members of the horse family.

Some horses will show only minimal signs of illness with just an odd cough while others have much more severe symptoms, such as loss of appetite, a bad cough, thick nasal discharge and signs of depression.

Ring the equine influenza hotline (1800 675 888) if you think your horse is infected with equine influenza. You should also tell your veterinarian and discuss with them appropriate supportive treatments. The following points are for broad guidance only.

### Foals and high risk animals

- Take particular care with pregnant mares, foals, stallions and older horses as they are more vulnerable to disease.
- Your veterinarian may recommend anti-inflammatory drugs for stallions or pregnant mares with a very high fever, to avoid testicular problems in stallions or abortion in mares.
- Please contact your veterinarian if you have any concerns about the health of newborn foals, they may be able to advise additional therapies for young foals.
- Foals can deteriorate quickly if they contract equine influenza. Prematurely born foals which are smaller in body size or foals in poor health are more prone to the virus.

### Supportive treatment

- It is important to match treatment for equine influenza with the severity of the infection.
- Monitor your horses and contact your veterinarian for advice if the illness worsens.
- Supportive treatments such as cough suppressants can help reduce complications.

- Antibiotics may be an appropriate treatment of secondary bacterial infections, particularly if fever persists for longer than four to five days and is accompanied by abundant and thick nasal discharge.
- There is currently no specific antiviral treatment registered for use for treatment of equine influenza.
- Rest reduces the opportunity for secondary infection and speeds recovery. Give horses at least 30 days complete rest after infection. Allow a longer recuperation period if the fever lasts more than four days.
- Rest infected animals in a dust-free, well-ventilated environment.

During the equine influenza outbreak it is important that you implement a policy of strict personal disinfection and hygiene when handling all horses.

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (September 2007). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of New South Wales Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.

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**EQUINE INFLUENZA HOTLINE**

**1800 675 888**

**WEBSITE FOR UPDATES**

**[www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/equine-influenza](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/equine-influenza)**



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