



## Notice to Industry 5

### Requirements for veterinarians at the Mickleham Post-Entry Quarantine Facility for horses

#### Outcome

The intended outcome of this document is for private veterinarians to understand the biosecurity requirements and their obligations to comply when treating imported horses at the Mickleham Post-Entry Quarantine Facility (MQF).

***This document is provided for information only. To the extent that this document is inconsistent with any import permit, direction or authorisation to enter a quarantine facility, the terms and conditions of the import permit, direction or authorisation to enter a quarantine facility take precedence and will apply. Failure to comply with a condition of an import permit, direction or authorisation to enter a quarantine facility may constitute an offence.***

#### Background

Each year, hundreds of horses are imported into Australia. Each consignment may pose a biosecurity risk from equine diseases such as equine influenza (EI), equine viral arteritis, contagious equine metritis, piroplasmiasis, surra and Japanese encephalitis. Additionally, the import of horses may present a plant quarantine risk from weed seeds present in air stalls, equipment and animal faeces.

The import of horses is regulated by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (the department), which has developed conditions for the import of horses to reduce the risk of diseases of biosecurity concern from entering Australia. Strict pre-export and post arrival quarantine requirements apply to all imported horses (except those from New Zealand and New Caledonia). Strict requirements are also in place for people and goods in contact with imported horses.

*The Biosecurity Act 2015* provides biosecurity officers with the authority to give decontamination directions to people if they are suspected of exposure to a disease of biosecurity concern to Australia.

#### Decontamination requirements

##### **Veterinarians attending the horse compound at MQF are required to:**

- Wear dedicated clothing, including underwear, socks and footwear. This clothing and footwear must remain in the compound until the horses have been released from biosecurity control.
- Undertake a complete head to toe, 3-minute shower (including washing hair and cleaning under fingernails) before leaving the horse compound.
- After showering, change into clean clothing, including underwear, socks and footwear (or clothing/footwear removed prior to entry) immediately before leaving the horse compound.

##### **Any personal equipment (e.g. mobile phones, tablets, paperwork, eyeglasses etc) used on site must either:**

- Remain in the horse compound until the horses have been released from biosecurity control

**OR**

- Be decontaminated prior to leaving the horse compound by wiping down the equipment with alcohol wipes

**OR**

- For simple jewellery, it may be permitted to enter and leave the horse compound if it can be adequately disinfected.

Only essential equipment is permitted into the horse compound. Unauthorised equipment and/or personal effects are **NOT** permitted.

Limited secure storage is available at the entrance to each compound for small personal items.

It is not a biosecurity requirement for veterinarians to shower **prior** to entering the horse compound.

**Note:** Veterinarians required to attend horses in both compounds must follow all personnel and equipment decontamination procedures when leaving each compound, as per usual requirements.

## General requirements for the horse compound

- Permission to enter the horse compound is only given to essential attendees.
- The importer must nominate a private veterinarian. Only nominated veterinarians are eligible to enter the horse compound once they have been inducted.
- Veterinarians must be registered with the veterinary board in the state or territory in which they live.
- The department may issue nominated veterinarians with a permission to enter the horse compound for 12 months provided they:
  - have completed all relevant department and site-specific training within the last 12 months; and
  - sign and comply with all requirements outlined in the authorisation form provided by a biosecurity officer before initial entry.
- In conjunction with the permission to enter the horse compound, security will issue each veterinarian an access card which may be retained by the veterinarian but will only be activated during each quarantine period.
- Non-inducted equine veterinary surgeons may enter for a veterinary emergency but must be accompanied at all times by departmental staff.
- All attendees must sign an entry and exit log in the presence of a biosecurity officer before entering and/or before leaving the horse compound.
- The horse compound manager (or delegate) must grant permission for any equipment to enter the horse compound. All equipment:
  - used for feeding, handling and/or treatment of horses during quarantine must be new or cleaned and disinfected before use; and
  - must only be used in the single horse compound for the duration of the quarantine period, unless otherwise specified by the department.
- Any attendee that breaches biosecurity procedures or witnesses a breach in biosecurity procedures must report the incident to the horse compound manager (or delegate) as soon as possible.
- Smoking is not allowed. MQF is a non-smoking, drug and alcohol-free site. If alcohol or recreational drugs are found on site or personnel are suspected of being under the influence of alcohol or recreational drugs they will be removed from MQF and further investigations conducted.

## Assessing, recording and reporting horse health

During the quarantine period, veterinarians are required to:

- Record details of all health inspections, clinical findings, abnormalities and treatments on the forms provided by the department for each horse they inspect.  
**Note:** Veterinarians must complete a clinical examination of a horse before commencing any treatment.  
**Note:** All findings of the examination must be recorded, including a diagnosis or differential diagnoses, and any treatments prescribed with the reason for the treatment included. Records must be clear and legible and must include the name and signature of the attending veterinarian.
- Ensure the horse's temperature is taken and recorded prior to administration of any anti-pyretic medications.
- Collect samples for culture and sensitivity and/or testing for exotic disease exclusion prior to administering antibiotics.
- Verbally advise the veterinary officer (VO) or horse compound manager (or delegate) immediately if there are significant abnormalities in any horse. Abnormalities include, but are not limited to, increased temperature, coughing or nasal discharge.
  - Notify the VO and/or horse compound manager (or delegate) if the rectal temperature of a horse is 38.5°C or higher (39°C or higher for foals under 6 months of age) at two consecutive readings.
  - The VO or horse compound manager (or delegate) will advise whether an additional nasopharyngeal swab (nasal swab for foals under 6 months of age) is required to test for equine influenza virus if the horse is pyrexia on two consecutive readings or the veterinarian prescribes medication that may mask clinical signs of disease.  
**Note:** An additional nasopharyngeal swab does not need to be taken if swabs have been taken within the last 24 hours and sent for testing.
- In instances where a horse has a persistently elevated temperature (over 38.5°C for more than 4 consecutive days), the importer may apply to the Horse, Livestock and Bird Imports Program in Canberra to reduce the frequency of swabbing. The application must include all relevant details of the affected horse/s. Each case will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- All veterinary medicines are required to be:
  - labelled and stored correctly, including storage in the locked cabinet or safe (S8 drugs) within the horse compound
  - prescribed and dispensed for use in the best interests of the animal.
  - recorded accurately in clinical records. Schedule 8: Controlled Drugs must be recorded in both the horse's clinical record and in a controlled substances register with all dosage amounts included.
- If the veterinarian is not giving the medication themselves, they may dispense the medications but must provide written administering instructions for the groom and be confident that it will be given appropriately. The veterinarian must:
  - label the medication and store it in the dispensing cupboard. Medication that has not been labelled and dispensed for a specific horse must not be stored in the dispensing cupboard at any time.

**Note:** Grooms are not to have access to the safe or the locked cabinet holding restricted drugs.

- only dispense medications that are Schedule 4 or lower.
- only dispense medications for oral or intramuscular administration. Grooms are not permitted to administer intravenous medications.

- Dispose of all waste and sharps in the designated containers within the horse compound.

### Use of Medicine Cabinet and Safe

- The veterinary medicines cabinet must be used to store all veterinary medicines and remain locked when not in use by a veterinarian.
- The only medications that may be left in the fridge or outside the locked medicine cabinet are those labelled and dispensed for specified horses with written instructions for the groom on how it must be administered.
- If the locked safe is used to store controlled medications (Schedule 8 drugs) each veterinarian will use their own allocated section of the safe. Each veterinarian must maintain their own controlled drug register book to record the dosage use of their Schedule 8 drugs at the site and the register must be kept within the safe with the medicines.

## Testing and horse examination requirements

Veterinarians must collect all diagnostic samples required by the import permit under supervision by the department. As a minimum, this includes:

- Blood samples taken on arrival to be stored at the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness.
  - Nasopharyngeal swabs (nasal swabs for foals under 6 months of age) collected on designated days of the quarantine period for EI testing and any additional tests if requested by the VO.
  - An examination of each horse within 24 hours of arrival at the horse compound. This must incorporate a thorough examination for ticks and ectoparasites, including:
    - close examination of ears, nostrils, under-body areas (axilla, inguinal region, submandibular), perineum, mane and tail and general examination of all other areas
    - a manual inspection of these sites using fingertips to feel for ticks including any lumps, swellings, bumps and scabs on the skin
    - conducting the examination in a systematic fashion beginning at the head and working towards the tail (on both sides), to ensure no areas are missed
- Note:** The veterinarian must report findings of any ticks or other ectoparasites to the supervising VO immediately.
- Any other testing or examinations as directed by the department biosecurity officers or VO's.

**Note:** Any additional testing for equine diseases by the veterinarian requires approval by the VO, prior to the collection of samples. Disease testing permission will not be given for horses being prepared for direct export on release from quarantine (e.g. onward movement to New Zealand at the end of the quarantine period). Blood profile testing for health checks not relating to biosecurity is permitted, however the laboratory, VO and the horse compound manager (or delegate) must be notified.

## Document information

The following table contains administrative metadata.

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## Version history

The following table details the published date and amendment details for this document.

Version	Date	Amendment details
6.0	18/11/2015	Updated on new template; updated for new quarantine facility.
7.0	16/06/2016	Updates to comply with the <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i>
8.0	30/08/2017	Updated contingency entry for equine veterinary surgeons in the case of an emergency
9.0	21/07/2020	Updated to include new requirements to ensure proper use of Scheduled medications in accordance with relevant legislation and guidelines. Updated requirements for tick and ectoparasite examinations. Updated department name. General updates to improve readability.
10.0	7/08/2020	Addition of drug and alcohol condition.
11.0	15/2/2021	Removal of requirement for prior permission before administering certain medications. General edits.