



NOTICE TO INDUSTRY 1

Horse importer responsibilities

Introduction

The purpose of this document is for importing agents and their staff and contractors involved with the import of horses from approved countries to be aware of their responsibilities and their obligation to comply with these requirements. This document excludes horse imports from New Zealand and New Caledonia.

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, industry notice or authorisation to enter a quarantine facility may constitute an offence.

Background

The import of horses poses a biosecurity risk of introducing animal and plant pests and diseases that are not currently present in Australia. Potential animal diseases associated with importing horses include equine influenza (EI), equine viral arteritis, contagious equine metritis, piroplasmosis, surra and Japanese encephalitis. Plant biosecurity risks are associated with weed seeds that may be present in animal feed, horse air-stalls, equipment accompanying horses and horse faeces.

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (the department) is responsible for regulating the import of horses and has developed conditions that manage the associated biosecurity risks. Strict pre-export quarantine (PEQ) and post-arrival quarantine (PAQ) requirements apply to horses in addition to decontamination and disinfection requirements for people and equipment accompanying them.

Horse importers are responsible for ensuring that all horses prepared for export to Australia meet all of Australia's import conditions. Pre-export testing, treatments, official government certification and transport requirements must be considered prior to loading for export to Australia. Following arrival from an approved country (other than New Zealand or New Caledonia), horses must complete at least 14 days PAQ at the department's Post-Entry Quarantine facility at Mickleham (MQF) in Victoria or at an Approved Arrangement (AA) site.

The primary disease of concern for which pre-export and post-arrival quarantine is in place is EI, of which Australia is officially free. It can be transmitted by an infected horse, either directly or via people or equipment in contact with it. Due to its contagious nature, people in proximity to imported horses can transmit EI virus even if they have had minimal contact with the horses themselves. Equipment used in feeding, handling and treating imported horses on arrival and during the quarantine period can also transmit the EI virus. A number of compounds will inactivate EI, including soaps, detergents, acids and oxidising agents (such as Virkon).

The *Biosecurity Act 2015* provides biosecurity officers with the authority to direct persons to decontaminate if they are suspected of exposure to a disease or pest of biosecurity concern to Australia. Horse importers and/or their agents must comply with all directions given by a biosecurity officer.

Preparatory requirements

Importers are required to:

Make a booking for the consignment of horses with the MQF horse compound manager (or delegate) or as per the relevant approved procedure for the AA site.

Confirm horse intake dates with the horse compound manager (or delegate) or AA site manager.

Apply for an import permit for the horses.

Read, understand and meet all requirements in each import permit issued.

Advise the horse compound manager (or delegate) or AA site manager the number of grooms attending the consignment during PAQ and the name of the head groom.

For horses completing quarantine at MQF, provide the horse compound manager (or delegate) within 24 hours of arrival of the horses with a written schedule of groom attendance.

If the schedule of groom attendance changes, notify the horse compound manager (or delegate) at least 24 hours in advance of the change. Emergency changes will need to be cleared by the manager on duty.

Note: During the quarantine period, horses will NOT be permitted to leave the horse compound or AA site for treatment, surgery or any other reason. All care for the horses, including veterinary treatment and surgery (if required) must be completed within the quarantine facility.

Note: Only male horses are permitted entry to MQF during the annual shuttle stallion consignments in July.

Pre-export quarantine responsibilities

Importers are responsible for:

Preparing horses in PEQ facilities approved by the department and the official government veterinarian of the exporting country.

Ensuring all pre-export conditions detailed on the import permit are met.

Providing documentation to the official veterinarian of the exporting country showing that all horses were tested, treated and vaccinated according to the import permit conditions.

Note: Foals under six months of age are exempt from EI vaccination, but they must be under six months of age at the date of export.

Ensuring horse transport vehicles for the transport of horses from the premises to the port of export and the horse air-stalls for transport on the aircraft are cleaned and disinfected prior to loading of the horses.

Ensuring that the compartment of the aircraft to be occupied by the horse and all removable equipment, penning and containers, including loading ramps, are clean and disinfected prior to loading of the horses.

Ensuring the official export certification travels with the horses to Australia.

Ensuring no hay or straw bedding is used during transport of the horses.

Transporting the horses to Australia by a route approved by the department, which is detailed on the import permit.

Pre-arrival responsibilities

Importers are required to:

Notify the department's regional horse coordinator of impending consignments at least three (3) business days prior to arrival. Notification must include the following information:

- contact number for the importer
- import permit number
- flight number
- air way bill number
- estimated time of arrival (and subsequently confirm time of arrival (or any changes to schedule) by phone to the horse coordinator)
- list of horses to be imported
- names of travelling grooms/veterinarians and the name of the head groom
- company providing the road transport of the horses to the PAQ facility.

Note: Form: [Notice of intent to import live horses \(NOI\)](#) (0.2) is available from the department's website for this purpose.

Submit a preparation schedule for all horses in the consignment to horses@awe.gov.au at least three (3) working days before the scheduled date of departure from the exporting country. The preparation schedule must show that by the time the horses depart for export, they will have met all permit conditions for entry into Australia, including tests, treatments, vaccinations and official veterinarian certification.

Load horses for export only after they have received written compliance advice from the department's Horse, Livestock and Bird Imports Program in Canberra.

Ensure that the commercial entries are processed in a timely manner (a minimum of 24 hours prior to the arrival of each flight).

Ensure that all personnel and contractors intended to be airside have the appropriate approval/passes.

Arrange for the road transport of the horses from the airport to the PAQ facility in compliance with animal welfare and WH&S requirements.

Provide a list of people nominated to enter the PAQ facility to the MQF horse compound manager (or delegate) or the AA site manager.

For MQF, a list of nominated people must be provided on the Form: [Record of persons authorised to attend to horses in the Mickleham Post Entry Quarantine horse compound during the post arrival quarantine period](#) (3.9), which is available on the department's website. Each nominated person must then sign and comply with all requirements outlined in the authorisation form provided by a biosecurity officer prior to initial entry.

For an AA site, the relevant authorised form approved in the AA site's SOP manual will be provided by the PAQ manager.

Note: Only essential attendees will be permitted to enter the facility during PAQ.

For the MQF, provide a stall and yard plan to the horse compound manager (or delegate).

Liaise with the MQF horse compound manager (or delegate) or AA site PAQ manager to arrange access for delivery of feed, bedding and other equipment prior to the arrival of the horses.

Liaise with the MQF horse compound manager (or delegate) or AA site PAQ manager to arrange induction / training of nominated personnel that will require entry to the facility during PAQ.

Advise the MQF horse compound manager (or delegate) or AA site PAQ manager if there are any specific treatments, imported feeds or supplements to be used during PAQ.

On arrival responsibilities

When horses arrive at the airport, importers are required to:

Ensure that all personnel and contractors (such as horse transport vehicle drivers, grooms and veterinarians) comply with department requirements. Refer relevant personnel and contractors to the following documents on the department's website for more information:

- [Notice to Industry 2: Biosecurity Requirements for aircraft operations personnel – imported horses](#)
- [Notice to Industry 3: Horse transport vehicle drivers – biosecurity requirements](#)
- [Notice to Industry 4: Requirements for grooms accompanying and working with horses at the Mickleham Post-Entry Quarantine Facility](#)
- [Notice to Industry 5: Requirements for veterinarians at the Mickleham Post-Entry Quarantine Facility for horses](#)
- [Notice to Industry 6: Designated attendees to the Mickleham Post-Entry Quarantine Facility – biosecurity requirements](#)
- [Notice to Industry 10: Cleaning contractors – biosecurity requirements.](#)

Ensure the horses are readily identifiable at the time of arrival, such as with mane or rump labels.

Ensure the head groom provides the health certificates for the horses to the corral team leader.

Organise for the horse stalls to be cleaned as soon as practicable after the horses have been unloaded. Stalls moving off site must be closed with flaps down and official tape applied, to enclose all biosecurity risk material prior to moving in an enclosed vehicle/ taut liner to the department approved location for cleaning and disinfection.

Post-arrival quarantine responsibilities

During PAQ, importers are required to organise for an inducted private veterinarian to:

Undertake the initial health inspection, required blood sampling and nasopharyngeal swabs (nasal swabs for foals under six months of age) for EI either on arrival at PAQ or within 24 hours.

Note: The only instance where horses do not require the nasopharyngeal swab within 24 hours of arrival into the PAQ facility is when the consignment arrives from a single PEQ facility and will complete the entire PAQ period as a single group without being combined with another consignment.

Repeat the health inspection and nasopharyngeal swabs (nasal swabs for foals under six months of age) for EI:

- four to six days after commencement of PAQ; **and**
- within four days of scheduled release from PAQ.

Attend to any horses needing veterinary attention, such as sick or injured horses, in PAQ.

During PAQ importers must:

Ensure all their staff comply with all departmental directions. This may include the clipping of horses' hair or other procedures to enable the effective examination/inspection of the horses.

Seek departmental permission prior to using the horse walker.

Notify the department if staff intend to use the horse crush.

Note: The department does not need to be notified if the scales have been used.

Ensure there is an adequate supply of feed, supplements and equipment required for PAQ in the PAQ facility

Ensure that all equipment used in the feeding, handling and treatment of the horses in PAQ is new, or cleaned and disinfected before use.

Ensure that all equipment is only used in that PAQ facility for the duration of the PAQ, unless otherwise approved by the department.

Ensure that all equipment remains in the PAQ facility until release of the horses. If permitted by the department, equipment may be removed only after disinfection to the satisfaction of the department.

Note: Equipment that arrived from overseas for use in the PAQ facility may be used and released from biosecurity control with the horses at the completion of PAQ without undergoing further treatment if prior to arrival in Australia the equipment was cleaned (i.e. removal of all organic material) and disinfected at labelled dilutions for at least ten (10) minutes contact time with at least one of the following disinfectants:

- Halogens: bleach
- Oxidising agents: Virkon
- Alcohols: ethanol, isopropyl
- Phenolics: Biogram
- Quaternary ammonium compounds: F10SC, Vantocil FHC, Phytoclean, Cavicide, Trigene II
- Alkalis: sodium hydroxide (caustic soda, soda ash, lye)
- Viraclean
- Fruity Hospital Grade Disinfectant.

Ensure all feed, bedding and equipment, including used water drums, is removed from each PAQ facility at the completion of PAQ.

Ensure that any contractors employed by the importer including grooms, veterinarians and farriers are aware of the need to comply with department requirements in the PAQ. Refer relevant personnel and contractors to the following documents on the department's website for more information:

- [Notice to Industry 3: Horse transport vehicle drivers – biosecurity requirements](#)
- [Notice to Industry 4: Requirements for grooms accompanying and working with horses at the Mickleham Post-Entry Quarantine Facility](#)
- [Notice to Industry 5: Requirements for veterinarians at the Mickleham Post-Entry Quarantine Facility for horses](#)
- [Notice to Industry 6: Designated attendees to the Mickleham Post-Entry Quarantine Facility – biosecurity requirements](#)
- [Notice to Industry 10: Cleaning contractors – biosecurity requirements.](#)

Organise the transport of the horses from each PAQ facility following completion of PAQ and release of the horses.

Notes:

Horses must be transported to and from the Mickleham Quarantine Facility (MQF) in commercial transport vehicles (trucks with/without truck trailers) only. Private trucks are not permitted. Horse floats are not permitted.

The height of horse trucks visiting MQF must be less than 4.2m to be compatible with the overhead clearance requirements at the horse compounds.

Importers must ensure that a private veterinarian is present during release from the quarantine facility if specifically directed by the department, in cases where there is a particular horse with a history of behaviour that indicates it may be difficult to load onto trucks and/or there is an increased risk of harm to horses or people.

For all other releases, a private veterinarian must be ‘on call’.

Importers may choose to have a private veterinarian present, as part of their risk management process, but this will not be mandatory (except for circumstances described above).

Organise for each PAQ facility to be cleaned to the satisfaction of the department following release of the horses.

Organise for the return of clothing, equipment or other personal items to the owners following release of the horses.

Other responsibilities

The importer is responsible for meeting all department costs associated with the import of horses including:

- the costs associated with PEQ facility assessment
- import permit applications and permit variations
- facility and horse inspections
- document assessment
- routine and additional testing (if required)
- fees for use of the government horse compound for PAQ.

Personnel biosecurity requirements

Personnel present at the airport corral for arrival of horses but do not accompany horses to a post-arrival quarantine facility are required to:

- Wear dedicated clothing (e.g. material or disposable overalls) in the corral.
- Shower completely from head to toe for three (3) minutes before leaving the corral (including washing hair and cleaning under fingernails).
- Surrender dedicated clothing for laundering and footwear for cleaning and disinfection (if required) to a biosecurity officer.
- Change into new/clean clothing and footwear after showering and immediately before leaving the corral.

All designated attendees entering a post-arrival quarantine facility (including personnel present at the airport for arrival of horses and also accompanying horses to a post-arrival quarantine facility) are required to:

- Wear dedicated clothing (including underwear and socks) and footwear in the PAQ facility. This clothing and footwear must remain in the PAQ facility until completion of PAQ.
- Shower completely from head to toe for three (3) minutes (including washing hair and cleaning under fingernails).
- Change into clean clothing (including underwear and socks) and footwear after showering and immediately before leaving the PAQ facility.

Note: personnel accompanying horses to a PAQ facility must travel to the PAQ facility in the designated groom compartment of the horse transport vehicle (not the horse transport vehicle driver's cabin).

Any personal items (mobile phones, tablets, paperwork, eyeglasses, simple jewellery etc.) used on site at the corral or in a post-arrival quarantine facility must either:

- Remain in the PAQ facility until the end of PAQ
OR
- Be decontaminated prior to leaving the corral or PAQ facility by wiping down the equipment with alcohol wipes
OR
- For simple jewellery, it may be permitted to enter and leave the PAQ facility if it can be adequately disinfected.

Note: Veterinarians, grooms and other personnel are permitted to move from one PAQ facility/compound to the other but must follow all personnel and equipment decontamination procedures when leaving each PAQ facility/compound.

Non-compliance with these conditions

Failure to comply with the above conditions may constitute an offence under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*.