



Australian Government
Biosecurity Australia

28 September 2007

BIOSECURITY AUSTRALIA ADVICE 2007/21

INTERIM QUARANTINE MEASURES FOR THE IMPORTATION OF HORSES

This Biosecurity Australia Advice (BAA) informs stakeholders that Biosecurity Australia has recommended to the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) that strengthened quarantine measures be implemented on an interim basis for the temporary and permanent importation of horses from all countries except New Zealand, to manage the current quarantine risk arising from the equine influenza outbreak.

The Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Diseases (CCEAD), comprising Commonwealth, State and Territory Chief Veterinary Officers and representatives of key horse industry groups, recommended that a working group be established to examine existing Australian quarantine policy for the temporary and permanent importation of horses in light of the current equine influenza outbreak. The purpose of this review of existing policy was to examine what, if any, further quarantine measures needed to be implemented at this time in light of the outbreak.

The working group, comprising a representative from Biosecurity Australia, States/Territories, and the horse industry, has proposed some amendments to Australia's current quarantine policy on an interim basis. CCEAD has endorsed the proposals of the working group.

Biosecurity Australia has now recommended to AQIS that the following quarantine measures, additional to the measures already in place, be implemented for horses imported from all countries except New Zealand, on an interim basis:

- equine influenza vaccination – in addition to current equine influenza vaccination, booster vaccination to be required between 14 and 21 days of entering pre-export quarantine (PEQ);
- diagnostic testing for equine influenza virus in PEQ and post-arrival quarantine (PAQ) – PCR testing for influenza A or equine influenza virus 7 to 10 days apart in PEQ with the last test within 4 days of departure, and PCR testing in PAQ on day 5;
- duration of PAQ period –the quarantine period will be extended to 21 days (from 14 days) for horses imported permanently where they have undergone PEQ in different premises but become intermingled as one consignment on aircraft or in PAQ premises. The additional time in PAQ, together with the above mentioned testing, will assist in being able to detect any virus that may be circulating within the quarantine group; and
- operation of quarantine premises – recommendations have been made for the strengthening of various operational guidelines, including additional measures for inspection of horses and facilities during PEQ and PAQ.

The interim measures include the option of testing for equine influenza during PEQ by antigen ELISA as an alternative to PCR testing. This is the routine test performed by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Reference Laboratory for equine influenza at Newmarket, United Kingdom.

The focus of the measures is to strengthen biosecurity arrangements during PEQ and PAQ. AQIS will make arrangements for PEQ premises to be inspected with the competent authority of the exporting country prior to the first consignments being exported from any country. AQIS is expected to commence implementing the additional interim quarantine measures immediately.

By way of example to stakeholders, details of the full interim quarantine measures for the temporary and permanent importation of horses from Member States of the European Union are at Attachments A and B (for clarity amendments are bolded and italicised).

Next steps

Biosecurity Australia will assist AQIS with the implementation of these interim measures.

Information on AQIS import permits can be obtained from AQIS through its website: www.aqis.gov.au or by facsimile (02) 6272 3110.

Information on IRAs and policy reviews being conducted by Biosecurity Australia is available on the internet at www.biosecurityaustralia.gov.au.

Please pass this notice to other interested parties. If those parties wish to be included in future communications on this matter they should get in touch with the contact officer (details below).

Confidentiality

Stakeholders are advised that, subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* and the *Privacy Act 1988*, all submissions received in response to advice will be publicly available and may be listed or referred to in any papers or reports prepared on the subject matter of the advice.

The Commonwealth reserves the right to reveal the identity of a respondent unless a request for anonymity accompanies the submission. Where a request for anonymity does not accompany the submission the respondent will be taken to have consented to the disclosure of his or her identity for the purposes of Information Privacy Principle 11 of the Privacy Act.

The contents of the submission will not be treated as confidential unless they are marked 'confidential' and they are capable of being classified as such in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

ROBYN MARTIN
General Manager
Animal Biosecurity

Contact: Jill Millan
Telephone: 02 6272
Facsimile: 02 6272 3399
E-mail: jill.millan@biosecurity.gov.au