



Australian Government
Biosecurity Australia

14 July 2008

BIOSECURITY AUSTRALIA ADVICE 2008/22
AMENDED INTERIM QUARANTINE CONDITIONS
FOR THE IMPORTATION OF HORSES

Following the Australian Government response to the Commission of Inquiry into Equine Influenza, Biosecurity Australia has provided further advice to the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) to amend the interim quarantine conditions for the importation of horses from all countries except New Zealand. Details are on Biosecurity Australia's website.

The latest amendments include specifying equine influenza strains in vaccines, collection of blood samples during pre-export quarantine (PEQ), additional equine influenza testing requirements and changes to the operational arrangements during PEQ and post-arrival quarantine (PAQ).

On 25 September 2007 the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry appointed the Hon Ian Callinan AC to conduct a Commission of Inquiry into the circumstances that led to the outbreak of equine influenza in Australia in August 2007 and the need for strengthened biosecurity procedures for the quarantine management of horses.

On 12 June 2008, the Australian Government announced that it had accepted all 38 recommendations from the Inquiry. Biosecurity Australia is responding to recommendations for which it has particular responsibility. This includes preparations for a formal horse import risk analysis (this will be the subject of a separate notice to stakeholders), the commencement of visits to inspect and review activities and events at pre-export quarantine (PEQ) premises located in exporting countries and also at post-arrival quarantine (PAQ) premises in Australia.

Biosecurity Australia has also provided further advice to the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) to amend interim quarantine conditions for imported horses. This follows interim conditions announced in September (BAA 2007/21) and December 2007 (BAA 2007/23) that tightened biosecurity arrangements during PEQ and PAQ, and included amended vaccination and testing requirements for equine influenza, options to extend the PAQ period and the operation of quarantine premises.

The latest amendments include:

- specifying that horses must be vaccinated with a vaccine that includes strains as specified by the OIE Expert Surveillance Panel for equine influenza subject to current availability in the country of export
 - Biosecurity Australia is continuing to review vaccines for equine influenza (taking into account the countries or regions from which the horses are being exported) and will provide advice to AQIS as further information becomes available;
- requiring a blood sample to be collected during PEQ with half the sample retained in the country of export and half sent to Australia. Both parts of the sample are to be retained for at least three months;
- additional testing for equine influenza virus post-arrival by rapid immunoassay in addition to polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests within 24 hours and five days of arrival;
- horses to be tested for equine influenza virus by PCR or antigen enzyme linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) within three days of release from PAQ;
- changes to the operational arrangements during PEQ, including that all PEQ premises are approved by AQIS;
- strengthening a range of other requirements, for example specifically requiring personnel to shower prior to entering PEQ premises, specifying that AQIS standards for PAQ premises clarify the requirement that grooms should not have contact with horses outside the premises during PAQ and that cabins of vehicles transporting horses be cleaned and disinfected if contaminated.

Biosecurity Australia is continuing to review the interim conditions to ensure that the time of testing for equine influenza in PEQ is as close as practicable to the end of the PEQ period. Further advice will be provided to AQIS on this. Consideration is also being given to reducing the number of approved PEQ facilities in exporting countries to provide improved and more practical opportunities to closely manage quarantine risks.

Interim quarantine conditions for horses are available on Biosecurity Australia's website: www.biosecurityaustralia.gov.au. Conditions for the temporary and permanent importation of horses from the European Union and the United States are attached (Attachments A, B, C and D). The latest changes are marked in bold for ease of reference.

Next steps

Biosecurity Australia will continue to assist AQIS with the implementation of these amended 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 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).

John Cahill
Chief Executive

Contact: Jill Millan
Telephone: 02 6272 4723
Facsimile: 02 6272 3399
E-mail: jill.millan@biosecurity.gov.au