



# Guidelines for the horse industry to minimise the spread of equine influenza

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NSW Department of Primary Industries - Animal and Plant Biosecurity Branch

Equine Influenza (EI) is an acute, highly contagious, viral disease which can cause rapidly spreading outbreaks of respiratory disease in horses and other equine species. The disease was diagnosed for the first time at a number of locations throughout New South Wales in late August and Queensland in early September. This disease has had a major impact on the Australian horse industry.

Transmission of EI virus to humans has not occurred during outbreaks of EI in horses.

## Clinical signs

The main clinical signs of EI are usually a sudden increase in temperature (to between 39°C and 41°C); a deep, dry, hacking cough; and a watery nasal discharge, which may later become mucopurulent. Other signs can include depression, loss of appetite, laboured breathing, and muscle pain and stiffness.

## Horse movements within SA

Horses within SA are able to move freely, however there are restrictions on holding events or gatherings of horses. A permit is required to hold an event or gathering when there are ten or more horses from two or more properties. To obtain a permit visit the PIRSA website

People taking horses to attend a non-racing event will require an Event Participant Declaration.

## Movement of horses into SA

Horses from non-infected jurisdictions (Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory) can enter SA provided they are accompanied by a Horse Health Statement.

Horses from NSW, Queensland and the ACT are not permitted to enter SA except by permit.

## Stopping the spread of equine influenza

Because the EI virus is highly contagious it is essential to minimise contact with any potentially infected horse. Contaminated equipment and personnel can easily transfer virus between premises. Influenza virus can survive on skin, fabrics and the surface of contaminated equipment.

Virus survival times can be as follows:

- Hard, non-porous surfaces, plastic, stainless steel: 24-48 hours
- Cloth and paper: 8-12 hours
- The virus is easily killed by cleaning and disinfection

## General Recommendations

Biosecurity and hygiene are important in preventing spread of the disease.

Keep your horse away from other horses.

If you have to visit another property (eg for essential purposes such as feeding or farrier work) use different equipment and clothing on each property or ensure equipment, including

boots and clothing is thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Ideally you should have a hot shower between visits.

If you have contact with a sick horse be especially cautious and do not go near another horse for 72 hours.

Feed or bedding should be purchased from clean sources with no suspicion of infected horses being in contact and is transported in vehicles which have been thoroughly cleaned and decontaminated with detergent or disinfectant.

If you have introduced another horse to your property it is advisable to isolate the new arrival for at least 5 days, but preferably 14 days to check for any signs of respiratory disease which may develop.

### **Disinfection of floats/horse gear**

Equipment and horse transport vehicles (including floats) are permitted to enter South Australia from non-infected jurisdictions.

Permits are required to introduce equipment and horse transport vehicles from Queensland, NSW and the ACT.

For disinfection of floats/horse gear a dirty surface must be thoroughly cleaned before it can be satisfactorily disinfected. All dirt and

organic matter such as manure and straw should be removed from floats/tackle/gear before disinfection can occur. All surfaces should be washed and cleaned first, then sprayed with an approved disinfectant. The virus is readily killed by common detergents and soaps (eg washing powder), washing soda, household chlorine bleach, hypochlorites and citric acid. Check concentration and exposure times on the label.

### **If you are aware of any horse with signs that suggest it may have equine influenza ring 1800 675 888**

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