

EQUINE INFLUENZA

Equine Influenza

Equine Influenza is a flu-type illness caused by a highly contagious influenza virus, which spreads rapidly. An outbreak in New Zealand would be devastating as many horses are not vaccinated and have the potential, if infected, to become severely ill and/or spread large amounts of the virus.

Signs may include

- deep, dry, non-productive cough;
- high temperature (often 40-41 degrees C);
- clear nasal discharge possibly becoming cloudy and mucoid;
- harsh lung sounds;
- stiffness and soreness with reluctance to move;
- horses may become tired and not eat, often for days;
- foals can develop fatal pneumonia.

If a horse develops a deep, dry cough or high temperature contact your vet immediately.



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How it spreads

Equine flu spreads by horses coughing out infected droplets that infect other horses in close proximity. These droplets may also land on equipment and transmit the virus to other horses if not disinfected properly. The virus can also be carried by humans on clothing, skin and hair. It can survive for up to 12 hours on clothing and 48 hours on equipment.

There is a short period after a horse is infected with the virus before signs of illness appear, usually 1-5 days. Infected horses can pass the virus to other horses before showing signs of infection, and for at least five days after horses appear to have recovered.

Precautions you can take

Equine influenza can be spread by the movement of people, horses and equipment. Prevent the spread by:

- keeping a horse (especially one from overseas) separate from other horses for 14 days when it arrives on your property;
- keep all horse equipment on a property. Do not lend, borrow or move equipment between properties.

Clean everything before you leave a property:

- wash hands with liquid soap or detergent in clean running water;
- wash clothing;
- clean footwear with dishwashing detergent or disinfectant, using a scrubbing brush if necessary to get into the tread of your boots;
- disinfect equipment by washing with detergent or spraying or dunking it in disinfectant, such as Detol.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: WWW.BIOSECURITY.GOV.T.NZ

Control measures

If an outbreak of equine influenza occurred in New Zealand, the stables involved and other affected places would be placed under quarantine. Horse movement would be restricted and horse events would likely be cancelled for the same period of time. Movement of people in contact with sick horses would also be limited. All equipment, transport vehicles, fences, stables and stalls would need to be cleaned and disinfected with an anti-viral disinfectant.

Vaccination

Most horses in New Zealand have not been vaccinated against equine influenza.

Vaccination will only be used in the event of an outbreak. If used correctly in an outbreak vaccines can slow the spread of the disease and reduce or minimise the effects in horses. However, it is important that the use of vaccines is strictly controlled, so that it is known which horses have been vaccinated and when they were vaccinated, to ensure that vaccinated horses do not spread the disease further.

The decision to vaccinate and which vaccine to use, will be determined by: the strain of virus involved; the extent of the outbreak; and the purpose for which the vaccine is intended to be used.



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