



NEWS UPDATE

ARBOVIRUS OUTBREAK

There are now over 700 horses known to be affected by the arbovirus outbreak. The majority of cases have been in NSW & Victoria with SA and Qld not far behind. A few cases have been seen in WA and one in the NT. Approximately 10% of cases have either died or been put down.

A number of different viruses have been identified. In Victoria, Ross River Virus has been associated with musculo-skeletal disease. Murray Valley Encephalitis virus and Kunjin virus have been isolated from the neurologically affected cases throughout all states.

Identification of the actual viruses causing the clinical signs is a difficult laboratory process and in many of the affected horses there has been less than ideal sample availability. Some horses have been exposed to more than one virus which also adds to the degree of difficulty.

The good news is that the number of new cases appears to be declining as the weather cools and the mosquitoes become less active.

The best advice is to keep horses free from mosquitoes as the arboviruses are transmitted by a number of mosquito species.

HORSE INDUSTRY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE AQIS

Some concerns were expressed about the effect the budget may have on activities. It appears that there is no impediment to progress.

Some increase in use of Eastern Creek has resulted in a reduction in the debt of the Horse Import Programme. An extension of the lease of Eastern Creek was taken up and lasts until December 2015. This new lease will be at commercial rates and the actual figure will probably have to be decided at arbitration. It will undoubtedly mean a much higher daily rate for horses.

Unfortunately any increase cannot be included in the current costs which mean that there is going to be a long delay in raising fees. As the rent increase will go back to January 2011 once the figure has been agreed new imports are going to get a major hit. Industry has expressed its grave concern on this matter.

New procedures mean that all horse imports will be deemed permanent which means a slight increase in testing but shorter period of surveillance by AQIS and hence reduced costs. Piroplasmosis positive horses will remain under AQIS surveillance.

These new procedures will mean the Spring Carnival horses can leave Werribee and move into a normal stable setting.

Pre export quarantine (in the country of origin) has seen an issue getting countries to comply with the paperwork. This appears to be being gradually resolved.

The apparent lack of timely progress for the new quarantine facility caused disquiet. Clearly the issues that have come to pass have been obvious for many years and the whole process seems to be unnecessarily slow.

BUDGET & QUARANTINE

\$19.1M has been earmarked to allow the scoping process to continue and land to be purchased for the new centre. There are also monies to make improvements to the current facilities. Minimal details are available and a meeting has been arranged with AQIS.

EADRA LEVY LEGISLATION

The Federal Government responded very favourably to the Senate RAT Committee report on the Inquiry into EADRA and related issues. This bodes well for the introduction and passage of the Levy legislation. Legislation has been drafted by Parliamentary Counsel and the Government is currently reviewing it. Dr Ian Denny (AHA) and Dr Diane Ryan (NSW DPI) recently met with a Parliamentary Secretary to answer some issues. It is still hoped to get the legislation introduced in the Winter session of Parliament.

MEMBERSHIP AHIC 2011/12

Renewal notices will be sent out shortly and there will be no change in fees. The recent IAC meeting was full of interesting discussion and exchange of views and took place with the co-operative manner that led to the signing of EADRA and the agreement to the levy mechanism.

This is an exciting time for the horse industry as it works to harmoniously deal with the post EADRA issues. The Board of AHIC looks forward to working with all members for the betterment of the industry.

ANIMAL HEALTH AUSTRALIA

AHIC is one of the four horse industry members of AHA's Industry Forum. This becomes an even more important relationship now that the Horse Industry has signed EADRA. EAD preparedness and biosecurity awareness are two of the cornerstones of AHA/Industry activities. Hopefully an Industry Liaison Officer's training course will be set up for the horse industry in the second half of 2011.

AHA is supported by Federal Government, the States and Territory Governments and Industry on a one third equal share basis. The freezing and/or decrease in DAFF/DPI funding has seen a cutback in funding of AHA and a loss of corporate knowledge in the jurisdictions. These factors are affecting all industries as the pressure increases for more self-funding of projects.

WELFARE FOR HORSES LEGISLATION

Victoria is the only jurisdiction with a Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses. This Code is not mandatory and sits within the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. The current Code is being amended and this process is almost finalized. It is possible that in the future the Code may sit under the Livestock Management Act.

National Standards and Guidelines for the Welfare of Horses are on hold due to a lack of funding. It appears that there will not be any progress with this nationally so it would be better for individual jurisdictions to pursue the matter of developing their own legislation.

HENDRA VIRUS FOR HORSES

CSIRO announced that through the dedicated work of Dr Deborah Middleton, who spoke at our AHIC forum at Equitana, a vaccine has been produced that prevents the infection of horses with Hendra virus. A horse vaccine is vital in breaking the cycle of Hendra Virus transmission from flying foxes to horses and then to people as it prevents both the horse developing the disease and passing it on.

Depending on further development, field trials and registration, the vaccine may be available as early as 2012.

AHIC congratulates Deborah Middleton on this fantastic development.