



Notice to Industry 1: Horse Importer Responsibilities

Movement and Quarantine of Live Non-New Zealand Horses

Outcome:

The outcome of this document is for importing agents and their staff and contractors involved with the import of live non-New Zealand horses to be aware of their responsibilities and their obligation to comply with these requirements.

This document is provided for information only. To the extent that this document is inconsistent with any import permit, AQIS direction, industry notice or authorisation to enter a quarantine station, the terms and conditions of the import permit, AQIS direction, industry notice or authorisation to enter a quarantine station take precedence and will apply. Failure to comply with a condition of an import permit, AQIS direction, industry notice or authorisation to enter a quarantine station may constitute a criminal offence.

Background:

The import of live horses is regulated by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS). Biosecurity Australia has provided recommendations regarding conditions for the import of horses to ensure that any potential quarantine risks, including equine influenza, strangles, African horse sickness, surra and Japanese encephalitis, can be managed. Strict pre- and post-arrival quarantine requirements apply to imported horses and all people and goods that come into contact with imported horses.

Importers of live horses have primary responsibility for ensuring that, wherever possible, the quarantine risks of imported horses are managed prior to the horse entering Australia. Importers must ensure that all pre-export and certification requirements of the import permit conditions have been met prior to the horse being loaded for import into Australia.

The primary disease of concern when the horses arrive in Australia is equine influenza. This disease can be transmitted via an infected horse, either directly or via people or equipment in contact with an infected horse. The equine influenza virus can be inactivated in a variety of ways, including by using soaps, detergents, acids and oxidising agents (such as Virkon).

All people in close proximity to imported horses on arrival in Australia and during their post-arrival quarantine (PAQ) period have the potential to transmit equine influenza virus, even if they have had minimal contact with the animals. Additionally, equipment used in the feeding, handling and treatment of the horses on arrival in Australia and in PAQ also carries a risk of transmitting equine influenza. The *Quarantine Act 1908* provides AQIS officers with the authority to give directions to a person who is moving, dealing with or interfering with goods that are subject to quarantine, this may include taking appropriate decontamination measures.

Preparatory Requirements:

Importers are required to:

- Request a booking for a specified number of horses with the quarantine station manager.
- Confirm horse intake dates with the quarantine station manager.
- Apply for an import permit for the horses.
- Read, understand and meet all requirements in each AQIS import permit issued.
- Apply for an import permit for the blood samples imported with the horses (or identify a pre-existing permit which can be used for this purpose).

- Advise the number of grooms attending the consignment and the name of the head groom.
- It is the importer's responsibility to ensure that owners are aware of the risks associated with the importation of horses into Australia. ALL care for the horses undertaking post-arrival quarantine must be carried out at the quarantine station and in accordance with AQIS's required biosecurity arrangements. Horses in post-arrival quarantine, will NOT be permitted to leave quarantine station for treatment, surgery or any other reason. Where necessary, the importer should make arrangements for treatment of horses within the quarantine station to ensure the welfare and survival of the horses.

Pre-Export Quarantine (PEQ) Responsibilities:

Importers are required to:

- Ensure horses undergo PEQ at facilities approved by AQIS and the official government veterinarian of the country of export.
- Ensure that all pre-export conditions detailed on the import permit are met.
- Provide complete certification to the official veterinarian in the country of export for inspection prior to loading for export to Australia. It must include evidence that each horse has:
 - been vaccinated in accordance with the requirements for veterinary certification; and
 - had a blood sample taken in compliance with the permit conditions; and
 - tested with negative results by PCR or ELISA for influenza A.
- Ensure that vehicles and containers for transport of horses from the premises to the port of export are cleaned and disinfected.
- Appoint a head groom for each consignment to be responsible for the blood samples being transported to Australia and retaining these samples in their care until arrival in Australia. The samples should be transported in a clearly labelled, sealed, hard shelled esky and packed to ensure the samples remain cold, but not frozen, during transport.
- Ensure that hay or straw bedding is not used during transport.
- Transport the horse(s) to Australia by a route approved by AQIS, as detailed on the import permit.
- Ensure that the compartment of the aircraft or vessel to be occupied by the horse and all removable equipment, penning and containers including loading ramps is clean and disinfected prior to loading.

Pre-Arrival Responsibilities:

Importers are required to:

- Notify AQIS horse co-ordinator of impending consignments at least 3 business days prior to arrival. Notification must include the following information:
 - Contact number for the importer
 - AQIS import permit number
 - Flight number
 - Air Way Bill number
 - Estimated time of arrival
 - List of horses to be imported, including details of any pregnant mares
 - Names of travelling grooms/vets and the name of the head groom
 - Company providing the transport of the horses to the quarantine station
- ⇒ A '0.2 Form: Notice of Intent' to Import Live Horses (NOI) form is available from AQIS for this purpose.

Note: The AQIS regional horse coordinator will use this information to organise the correct number of AQIS officers to be present for the arrival of the flight, and to schedule a pre-flight briefing for all industry participants.

- Make available to AQIS sufficient evidence for AQIS to verify the existence of veterinary certification and compliance with the import conditions up to the time the horse arrives at the airport of departure, including dates and results of all required tests and treatments, dates of all required vaccinations, details of any additional treatments the horse is on and the draft wording for the health certification.
- Provide the authorised visitors list to the quarantine station manager and the signed '3.9a/b Form: Authorisation by importing agent...' forms for each truck driver, groom, veterinarian and farrier.
- Provide a contingency plan for the event of an emergency or accident en route to the quarantine station, requiring the attendance of emergency services personnel. Each importer/transport driver should submit a contingency plan to the AQIS Horse Coordinator for this event, at least 3 days prior to importation of the horses, which should include reference to RTA, police, fire, ambulance and veterinarians. The contingency plan should clearly outline how biosecurity will be maintained, how horses may be treated at the site and/or transported to the quarantine station and/or euthanased. The plan must also include clean-up of any contaminated site/s, prevention of access by un-necessary personnel and animals and control of any personnel or animals that may be exposed to the horses or other quarantine risk material. Reference may be made to '0.7 TOR – Emergency Personnel Decontamination Information' and other relevant documents.
- Ensure that the commercial entries are processed in a timely manner (a minimum of 24 hours prior to the arrival of each flight).
- Ensure that all staff that will be airside have the appropriate approval/passes.
- Arrange for the transport of the horses from the airport to the quarantine station.

On-Arrival Responsibilities:

Importers are required to:

- Organise for all personnel and contractors employed or contracted by the importer for activities in the corral (such as truck drivers, grooms) to be present for a briefing with the AQIS horse co-ordinator or team leader prior to the arrival of the flight. A representative from the importing company must be present for this briefing.
- Ensure that any contractors employed by the importer including transport drivers, grooms and veterinarians are aware of the need to comply with AQIS requirements.
 - ⇒ Refer to the documents 'Notice to Industry 2: Freight Aircraft Operations Personnel – Biosecurity Requirements', 'Notice to Industry 3: Transport Drivers – Biosecurity Requirements', 'Notice to Industry 4: Grooms – Biosecurity Requirements', 'Notice to Industry 5: Veterinarians – Biosecurity Requirements', 'Notice to Industry 6: Visitors to the PAQ – Biosecurity Requirements' documents for further information.
- Ensure all AQIS directions are complied with.
- Ensure the head groom provides the horse blood samples to the AQIS team leader at the airport for sealing prior to transport to the quarantine station. Note: At the quarantine station, AQIS will organise for the blood samples to be transported to the Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL).
- Organise for the horse stalls to be cleaned as soon as practicable after the horses have been unloaded. Stalls moving off site must be shrink wrapped from bottom to top to enclose all Quarantine Risk Material (QRM) prior to moving in an enclosed truck / taut liner to the Quarantine Approved Premise.
 - ⇒ Refer to the Technical and Operational Reference '2.1 TOR - Cleaning and disinfection of horse stalls' for further information.

Post-Arrival Quarantine Responsibilities:

Importers are required to:

- Organise for a private veterinarian, permitted by AQIS, to undertake the initial health inspection, required blood sampling and nasopharyngeal swabs for EI either on arrival at PAQ or within 24 hours.
- Organise for a private veterinarian, permitted by AQIS, to repeat the health inspection and nasopharyngeal swabs for EI five days after arrival of the last horse into PAQ.

- Ensure the supply of equipment used in the feeding, handling and treatment of the horses in PAQ, including feed and medicines.
- Ensure that all equipment used in the feeding, handling and treatment of the horses in PAQ is new or cleaned and disinfected before use and must be used only in the premises for the duration of the PAQ, unless otherwise approved by AQIS.
- Ensure that all equipment is disinfected to the satisfaction of AQIS prior to removal from the PAQ.
 - ⇒ Refer to the Technical and Operational Reference '3.1 TOR - Cleaning and disinfection of equipment' for more detailed information.
- Ensure all equipment, including used water drums, is removed from the quarantine station at the completion of PAQ.
- Ensure that any contractors employed by the importer including grooms, veterinarians and farriers are aware of the need to comply with AQIS requirements in the PAQ.
 - ⇒ Refer to the documents 'Notice to Industry 3: Transport Drivers – Biosecurity Requirements', 'Notice to Industry 4: Grooms – Biosecurity Requirements', 'Notice to Industry 5: Veterinarians – Biosecurity Requirements', 'Notice to Industry 6: Visitors to the PAQ – Biosecurity Requirements' documents for further information.
- Organise for a private veterinarian authorised by AQIS to take the three day prior to release nasopharyngeal swabs for EI.
- Organise the transport of the horses from the quarantine station following completion of quarantine and release of the horses.
- Organise for the quarantine station to be cleaned to the satisfaction of the supervising AQIS officer following completion of quarantine and release of the horses.
 - ⇒ Refer to the Technical and Operational Reference "3.5 TOR - Cleaning and disinfection of premises immediately after release of horses".

Other Responsibilities:

The importer is responsible for meeting all AQIS costs associated with the import of horses including the costs associated with import permit applications, inspection and accommodation at the quarantine station (for both the horses and the grooms).

Personal Biosecurity Requirements:

Personnel present at the airport for the arrival of horses and not accompanying horses to the PAQ are required to:

- wear dedicated clothing and footwear in the 'corral'; and
- undertake a complete head to toe, 3 minute shower before leaving the 'corral' area at the airport; and
- surrender clothing to an AQIS officer for laundering; and
- change into new/clean clothing.

Personnel present at the airport for the arrival of horses and accompanying horses to the PAQ are required to:

- travel to the quarantine station on the horse float/truck;
- wear dedicated clothing and footwear in the quarantine station whilst contacting horses. This clothing and footwear must remain in the quarantine station until completion of PAQ (and must be laundered prior to release from the quarantine station);
- undertake a complete head to toe, 3 minute shower and change into fresh clothing and footwear immediately before leaving the quarantine station.

Personnel attending the PAQ are required to:

- wear dedicated clothing and footwear in the quarantine station whilst contacting horses. This clothing and footwear must remain in the quarantine station until completion of PAQ (and must be laundered prior to release from the quarantine station);
- undertake a complete head to toe, 3 minute shower and change into fresh clothing and footwear immediately before leaving the quarantine station.

⇒ Refer to the Technical and Operational Reference '0.3 TOR - Personal Decontamination' for more information.

Any personal equipment (e.g. laptops, mobile phones, paperwork etc) used on site at the corral or quarantine station must either remain on the quarantine station until the end of PAQ or be decontaminated prior to leaving the quarantine station by wiping down the equipment with alcohol wipes.

VERSION	DATE	REASON FOR ISSUE	AUTHOR
1	2 July 2008	To ensure that the importing agents are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the import of live non-New Zealand horses.	
2	23 Sept 2008	Updated to reflect recent changes to permit conditions and instructional material, to incorporate comments from AQIS NSW and the Dec 2007 SOP and to incorporate comments from HICC	Amy Guihot
3	12 November 2008	Updated to incorporate advice from AQIS regions at October meeting and legal advice	Michelle Blowes
4	19 January 2009	Updated to include legal advice	Michelle Blowes
5	25 June 2009	Updated following meeting on 13 May 2009	Michelle Blowes