



Notice to Industry 5: Veterinarians- Biosecurity Requirements

Movement and Quarantine of Live Non-New Zealand Horses

Outcome:

The outcome of this document is for veterinarians treating imported live non-New Zealand horses at post arrival quarantine facility to be informed of their biosecurity requirements 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, 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.

The primary disease of concern when handling imported horses 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).

Veterinarians treating imported horses in post arrival quarantine (PAQ) have the potential to transmit equine influenza virus. Equipment used in the feeding, handling and treatment of the horses 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.

Personal Biosecurity Requirements:

Veterinarians are required to:

- wear dedicated clothing and footwear in the quarantine station whilst in contact with horses. This clothing and footwear must remain in the quarantine station (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 (or clothing/footwear taken off prior to entry into the quarantine station) 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 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. As such, visitors are advised to only take essential equipment in to the quarantine station. Secure storage is available at the gate for valuable items, not needed inside the quarantine station.

Whilst it is not a requirement for veterinarians to shower prior to entering the quarantine station, shower facilities are available at the time of required change into dedicated clothing and footwear. In order to protect the health of horses in the station and reduce the risk of introduction of endemic disease, veterinarians may shower upon entry to the quarantine station.

Requirements at the quarantine station:

All visitors to the PAQ must be authorised by AQIS. Veterinarians must complete training and sign the relevant authorisation form to gain a 12-month permission to enter the quarantine station. Veterinarians are required to comply with all requirements outlined in the '3.8b Form: Permission for a veterinarian, farrier, or other authorised visitor to enter, leave and take goods into and out of a quarantine station'.

Only visitors authorised by the importer of the horses will be considered by AQIS for authorisation. The importer will provide AQIS with the relevant authorisation form for each veterinarian.

Non-essential visitors will not be given authority by AQIS to enter the PAQ.

The official visitors register must be completed and signed in the presence of a quarantine officer upon entry and exit from the quarantine station.

Health records for each horse are held on the clipboard at a designated area within the horse compound. Details of all health inspections must be recorded on the '3.13 Form: Veterinary health inspection of horse in PAQ' for each horse by the veterinarian performing the inspection.

Authorised veterinarians must record all clinical findings and all treatments on the '3.15 Form: daily health record' and attach a '3.14 Form: Veterinary treatment record'. Any treatments that may compromise the identification of quarantinable disease (including anti-inflammatory/antipyretic drugs) must be reviewed with the AQIS veterinary officer prior to application. If such treatment is required after hours, the veterinarian must contact the AQIS veterinary officer via mobile phone. If the AQIS veterinary officer is unable to be contacted, the veterinarian must contact the quarantine station manager; and the AQIS veterinary officer must be advised the following business day according to routine notification of veterinary attendance and treatments. Veterinarians **MUST** label any medication in accordance with Australian veterinary medicines legislation.

Any abnormalities in the health of the horse, diagnosis or treatments implemented must be detailed on the horse's '3.15 Form: daily health record' and '3.14 Form: veterinary treatment record'. **The quarantine station manager or the AQIS veterinary officer must be verbally advised immediately if significant abnormalities such as increased temperature, coughing or nasal discharge are detected.**

The AQIS veterinarian and/or quarantine station manager must be notified if at any time the rectal temperature is 38.5°C or higher or the temperature of any 'foal at foot' is 39°C or higher - a nasopharyngeal swab for a PCR test for influenza A virus (or equine influenza virus) is required.

Collect all diagnostic samples under AQIS supervision according to instructions provided by the AQIS officer or the AQIS veterinary officer.

- ⇒ Refer to the Technical and Operational Reference '3.4 TOR – Collection, packaging and despatch of samples' for more information.
- ⇒ Note: An additional test does not need to be taken if swabs have been taken within the last 24 hours and sent for testing.
- ⇒ In instances where a horse has a persistently elevated temperature (over 38.5 for more than 4 consecutive days), the importer may make an application to reduce the frequency of swabbing. The application must be made to AQIS Canberra via the AQIS vet and the quarantine station manager, in writing with the details for this 'case', which may include details of any other relevant horses in the quarantine station. Importers should note that there is no guarantee that the frequency will be varied after the 4-day period and each case will be assessed on its merits.

No items of equipment may be taken into the quarantine station except with the permission of the quarantine station manager. All equipment used in the feeding, handling and treatment of the horses in PAQ must be 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.

All equipment must be disinfected to the satisfaction of AQIS prior to removal from the PAQ.

- ⇒ Refer to the Technical and Operational Reference '2.1 TOR - Cleaning and disinfection of equipment' for more detailed information.

All required equipment including diagnostic instruments and medications must be provided by the veterinary practitioner.

If laboratory testing is required for a general health check, the private veterinary practitioner must notify the laboratory and the AQIS veterinarian/quarantine station manager.

- ⇒ Refer to the Technical and Operational Reference '3.4 TOR – Collection, packaging and despatch of samples' for more information.

Pathological waste and sharps shall be deposited in the designated containers within the quarantine station.

All personnel entering the horse compound must agree to report any breach or suspected breach of quarantine procedures (by that or any other person) to the quarantine station manager.

On exit all visitors must sign out of the quarantine station using the official visitors register.

VERSION	DATE	REASON FOR ISSUE	AUTHOR
1.0	23 Sept 2008	To inform veterinarians of their biosecurity requirements, to incorporate information from the December 2007 SOP and comments from AQIS regions and HICC members.	Amy Guihot
2.0	23 January 2009	Updated to incorporate advice from AQIS regions at October meeting and legal advice. Includes final email comments from regional staff.	Michelle Blowes
3.0	9 February 2009	Updated for consistency with Authorisation documents regarding rectal temperatures of 'foals at foot'.	Michelle Blowes
4.0	25 June 2009	Amended following meeting on 13 May 2009	Michelle Blowes
5.0	11 February 2010	Amended following advice from BA regarding swabbing	Michelle Blowes