



Australian Government
Biosecurity Australia

2006/01923

13 July 2006

BIOSECURITY AUSTRALIA POLICY MEMORANDUM 2006/20

**IMPORTATION OF HORSES FROM THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES AND THE
RETURN OF AUSTRALIAN HORSES FROM THE EMIRATES**

This Biosecurity Australia Policy Memorandum (BAPM) provides stakeholders with final amended quarantine requirements for the temporary importation of horses from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for competing in international races and other equestrian events, and final amended requirements for the return of Australian horses after competing in international events in the Emirates. The conditions take effect from 13 July 2006.

In November 2005, Biosecurity Australia circulated for stakeholder comment, via BAPM 2005/16, draft amended quarantine conditions for the temporary importation of horses from the UAE for racing and other competition, and for the return of Australian horses after competing in international events in the Emirates. BAPM 2005/16 provided background to the review including the suspension of the previous conditions in 1997 when the UAE authorities advised Biosecurity Australia that they were unable to provide certification for surra.

A number of stakeholders provided comments on the proposed amendments and these have been taken into account in finalising the amended conditions. A summary of stakeholder comments and Biosecurity Australia's responses are at Attachment A. The amended requirements for temporary importation are at Attachment B and those for return of Australian horses are at Attachment C.

Changes from the proposed requirements circulated under BAPM 2005/16 are:

Temporary Imports

The **Conditions of Administration** section has been expanded to specify that the conditions will normally apply to UAE-based horses (defined as horses that have been continuously resident in the UAE for 60 days prior to export) but may apply, at the discretion of the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS), to horses imported from other countries into the UAE less than 60 days prior to shipment to Australia. Such horses may, for example, be en route from Britain to Australia for the Spring Racing Carnival.

The requirement that the horse be accompanied by an appropriate international passport has been transferred from the **Veterinary certification** requirements to a new section, **Documentation**.

References in the **Veterinary certification** section to 'two months' have been changed to '60 days'. Certification that no case of equine influenza has been reported in the UAE in the previous 3 months has been added. Thorough examination of the horse to ensure freedom from ticks following

treatment for external parasites in pre-export quarantine (PEQ) to confirm efficacy of treatment is required. Testing of samples, collected not less than 5 days after commencement of this period, for surra and piroplasmiasis is now required. Additional testing for surra by direct examination of blood for trypanosomes is specified, together with an antibody test. This increases the chances of identifying a horse that may have contracted infection with the causative agent *Trypanosoma evansi* but not developed detectable antibodies by the time samples were taken.

The **Additional post-arrival requirements for horses seropositive to piroplasmiasis** have been re-formatted and amended to allow seronegative horses that may have been recently exposed to infection, eg been resident on premises that have had recent cases, to be imported subject to meeting the same requirements as piroplasmiasis positive horses.

Return of Australian Horses

The **Conditions of Administration** section has been expanded to specify that the conditions will normally apply to horses imported directly into the UAE from Australia or New Zealand and returning within 60 days (racehorses) or 42 days (others) – no maximum time of stay was stipulated in the conditions proposed in November 2005. Horses other than registered racehorses travelling to the UAE for events such as endurance rides are considered at greater risk of exposure to surra, and to ticks that may transmit piroplasmiasis, hence the shorter residency period.

AQIS may allow the return of Australian horses exported from Australia to an approved third country and then on to the UAE provided they return to Australia within 60 days. Such horses may, for example, have travelled to Hong Kong for the Cathay Pacific International Races in December and then to Dubai for their International Racing Carnival which commences in mid-January.

A requirement that the horse be accompanied by an appropriate international passport has been included in a new section, **Documentation**.

The **Veterinary certification** requirements have been re-formatted. The PEQ period after the last equestrian event has been increased from 7 to 14 days. Testing of samples, collected not less than 5 days after commencement of this period, for surra and piroplasmiasis is now required. Additional testing for surra by direct examination of blood for trypanosomes is specified, together with an antibody test.

The **Post-arrival quarantine requirements** have been amended to remove the specific requirement for a post-arrival test for surra, now required during PEQ (see preceding paragraph), and to amend and clarify the disinsection requirements.

Consultation

These requirements come into effect from 13 July 2006. Please pass this notice to other interested parties. If those parties wish to be included in future communications on this matter they should get in touch with the contact officer listed below. Alternatively, if you wish to be removed from the distribution list, please advise the contact officer.

Information on import risk analyses and policy reviews being conducted by Biosecurity Australia is available on the Internet at www.biosecurityaustralia.gov.au

Confidentiality

Stakeholders are advised that, subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* and the *Privacy Act 1988*, all submissions received in response to policy memoranda will be publicly available and may be listed or referred to in any papers or reports on the subject matter of the memoranda.

The Commonwealth reserves the right to reveal the identity of a respondent unless a request for anonymity accompanies the submission. Where a request for anonymity does not accompany the submission the respondent will be taken to have consented to the disclosure of his or her identity for the purposes of Information Privacy Principle 11 of the *Privacy Act 1988*.

The contents of the submission will not be treated as confidential unless the submission is marked 'confidential' and they are capable of being classified as such in accordance with the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

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STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS AND BIOSECURITY AUSTRALIA'S RESPONSES TO BAPM 2005/16

Stakeholder comments and Biosecurity Australia's responses

Comments were received from:

Mr Saeed Khalifa Al Sha'ali, Director, and Dr Tom Morton, Veterinary Adviser, Department of Animal Wealth, Ministry of Agriculture, UAE

Dr Patricia Ellis, Principal Animal Health Adviser to the Australian Racing Board and Secretary, International Movement of Horses Committee, International Federation of Horseracing Authorities

Mr Crispin Bennett, Crispin Bennett International Horse Transport Pty Ltd

Dr Mary Barton, Professor of Microbiology, University of South Australia

Mr G Barry Smyth, President, Australian Horse Industry Council Inc.

Mr Andrew Ramsden, Chairman, Australian Racing Board Ltd

Dr Hugh Millar, Chief Veterinary Officer, Victoria

Dr Fiona Sunderman, for the Chief Veterinary Officer, Western Australia

Some stakeholders did not directly receive BAPM 2005/16. We appreciated the feedback from a number of stakeholders and have addressed the problem.

The proposed requirements circulated with BAPM 2005/16 were based on existing protocols for the temporary importation of horses, and for the return of Australian horses, from other countries, eg Japan and Singapore, staging international equestrian events.

The proposed requirements were developed in close consultation with Dr Tom Morton, Emirates Racing Senior Veterinarian and Veterinary Adviser to the UAE Department, and Dr Patricia Ellis who has internationally recognised expertise in animal quarantine and has worked in the UAE (and Bahrain).

Biosecurity Australia also liaised closely with the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) to ensure the operational elements of the conditions are workable.

Biosecurity Australia acknowledges the invaluable assistance of Drs Morton and Ellis, and of AQIS, in the development of the amended conditions.

UAE Department of Animal Wealth

Comment: The UAE authorities sought clarification and modification of many of the standard clauses based on regulatory procedures in the UAE. They had no major issue with the thrust of the protocols and their intent.

Biosecurity Australia's response: Appropriate modifications refining the protocols were agreed.

Crispin Bennett International Horse Transport

Comment: Mr Bennett objected to the suggestion that there was 'limited demand for permanent importation of horses from the UAE' and provided background information to support their view. He sought early attention to development of conditions for permanent importation.

Biosecurity Australia's response: Advice noted. Development of conditions for permanent importation will follow.

Dr Mary Barton / Australian Veterinary Association / Dr Patricia Ellis

Comment: All expressed concern at the risk of contact with ticks and/or introduction of piroplasmiasis if imported horses participated in endurance rides and cross-country events.

Biosecurity Australia's response: There are piroplasmiasis related requirements in the conditions. Biosecurity Australia agreed to include a requirement, recommended in the piroplasmiasis import risk analysis report, that horses seropositive for piroplasmiasis be excluded from temporary importation for endurance rides in Australia.

The President, Australian Horse Industry Council Inc.

Comment: Mr Barry Smyth stressed the importance of not compromising the relatively disease-free status of Australia's horse population.

Biosecurity Australia's response: Agreed.

Comment: Mr Smyth also expressed concern at the 'seeming lack of sensitivity and specificity of the currently available tests for surra' and asked whether research was being conducted on improved tests.

Biosecurity Australia's response: Biosecurity Australia acknowledged that current tests are not ideal, but advised that it considered safe importation is possible with appropriate risk management. Research is being done in several countries including Australia and the UAE, and the testing requirements will be kept under review.

Comment: Mr Smyth also observed that 'currently available vaccines against EI (equine influenza), particularly the vaccine approved by AQIS for use in Australian horses before export, no longer contain epidemiologically relevant strains.' He asked about the routine use of the Directigen Flu A assay for testing all horses entering Australia.

Biosecurity Australia's response: Biosecurity Australia is aware that many currently available vaccines, including Duvaxyn IE Plus, may not provide adequate protection and that AQIS has this matter under consideration. Biosecurity Australia's view is that the appropriate use of Directigen was as an aid to diagnosis rather than as a screening test.

Comment: He expressed concern at the risk of introducing piroplasmiasis, particularly with endurance horses, and asked if including a test of returning horses would be considered.

Biosecurity Australia's response: Horses sero-positive for piroplasmosis are not permitted import for competing in endurance rides. The PEQ period for returning Australian horses has been increased from 7 to 14 days and testing for piroplasmosis is now required during PEQ.

Comment: He questioned the requirement for all post-arrival quarantine (PAQ) of returning horses be undertaken at a Government Quarantine Station and mentioned the successful use of the quarantine premises at Sandown in Victoria.

Biosecurity Australia's response: The option of PAQ in privately owned quarantine approved premises would be considered. (The option is included in the new conditions.)

Australian Racing Board Ltd

Comment: Supported the proposals.

Chief Veterinary Officer, Department of Primary Industries, Victoria

Comment: Dr Millar observed that there was an inconsistency in the approach to piroplasmosis in that seropositive horses could be temporarily imported with enhanced risk management but seronegative horses that may have been exposed could not.

Biosecurity Australia's response: The section, '**Additional post-arrival requirements for horses seropositive to piroplasmosis**', has been amended to address this issue by adding '**or that have recently been exposed to piroplasmosis**' to the heading, adding a footnote to the heading to include such horses and substituting the term 'other horses subject to these requirements' for the term 'sero-positive horses' through the text.

Chief Veterinary Officer, Department of Agriculture, Western Australia

Comment: The Department supports the approach and agrees with the proposed requirements.