

# Spring Newsletter



September 2007 - November 2007

## EQUINE INFLUENZA

As you all know, we have had a serious outbreak of Equine Influenza (EI) in Australia in the past week. Up until last week, EI was an exotic disease to Australia. The disease is present in Europe, Canada, USA, Scandinavia and South America. It is an acute, **highly** contagious viral disease that affects **all** equine species, including donkeys and mules.

### Clinical Signs

- Dry hacking cough, frequently lasting 2-3 days
- Watery nasal discharge that may become cloudy or coloured
- Rapid onset of fever, between 39<sup>oC</sup> and 41<sup>oC</sup>.
- Other less common signs include depression, loss of appetite, laboured breathing, muscle pain and stiffness.

The spread of the disease is explosive in a naïve population, such as Australia. Mortality is very low, although young foals and elderly horses may succumb to the virus. It is also important to note that horses worked too soon after apparent recovery can develop permanent lung, muscle and heart damage.

### Transmission

Transmission of the virus occurs principally by aerosol from virus-laden cough and a single cough can spread virus particles over 35 metres. Infected horses will shed virus up to 2 days prior and 6 days after the first signs of illness. Windborne virus can travel up to 8 metres, but this is limited when the weather is humid.

Transmission between establishments is usually by the movement of infected horses, hence we have the current standstill on all horse movements around the country. Some horses may be partially immune and not show signs of disease, but these horses can also be an important source of transmission. Humans, vehicles (especially horse transport vehicles), bedding, feed material and other objects such as twitches can also be sources of contamination that allow the spread of the virus between establishments.

### Treatment

Equine influenza has no specific treatment, most animals will recover of their own accord. Some may need supportive therapy such as anti-inflammatories and antibiotics for secondary bacterial infection. Importantly, the causative agent of EI is a virus, not bacteria, so antibiotics will not prevent your horse from contracting the disease.

### Current Situation

Currently there is a standstill on all horse movements around Australia. This aims to contain the spread of the virus so we can hopefully eradicate the disease. It is vitally important that all horse owners abide by this standstill. This is likely to be lifted in Victoria on Friday 31st August, but we warn owners to be vigilant. **Please only move your horses if absolutely necessary.** The economic impact will be astronomical to the horse industry if EI becomes established in Australia.

### Stopping the Spread

Because the EI virus is so contagious it is essential to minimise contact with any potentially infected horse. Contaminated equipment and personnel can easily transfer the virus between premises. Viral survival times are as follows;

- Hard, non-porous surfaces: 24-48 hours
- Cloth and paper: 8-12 hours

The virus is easily killed with proper cleaning and disinfection. Adequate disinfection includes washing with detergent or soap with warm/hot water. There are penalties in place for people moving horses under the standstill. People who move horses will face fines of up to \$24,000 and a 12 month jail sentence.

#### *General recommendations*

- Keep your horse away from other horses
- If you have to visit other horse properties, use different equipment and clothing on each property and ensure equipment such as boots and clothing is disinfected.
- If you have people working for you, advise them not to contact other horses. If they absolutely have to, ensure they disinfect themselves thoroughly before entering your property.
- If you have a sick horse, be especially careful and do not go near another horse for 72 hours.
- Ensure feed and bedding comes from clean sources that have no suspect cases and is transported in clean, disinfected vehicles.
- Do not transfer any equipment between horses, except for your own. This includes halters, bridles, twitches, saddles and even horse floats.
- Disinfection of floats and equipment must be a thorough process. All dirt and organic matter (i.e. straw and manure) should be removed before you can begin disinfection. All surfaces must then be washed and cleaned, then sprayed with an approved disinfectant, e.g. chlorine bleach, washing powder and common household detergents.
- If you have introduced another horse to your property, it is advisable to isolate the new arrival for at least 5 days, preferably 14 days. Pay particular attention to those that have come from large sales, have come long distances via commercial transportation or recently returned from events. Check the clinical signs and temperature of these horses daily. A fever strongly suggests something is wrong.

The outbreak of EI in Australia has had and will continue to have, a huge impact on all areas of the horse industry. This means not just the racing and thoroughbred breeding industries, but eventing, showing, endurance and pony events as well. The economic impact is enormous, but also the clinical impact on so many unwell horses and the ongoing effects of the illness. **ALL horse owners need to be vigilant!**

If you have any questions or queries, please don't hesitate to contact us at the clinic. If you have any suspicions of EI in a horse, either contact us at the clinic or on the hotline number set up by the Australian Government, 1800 675 888.

## *Newsletters online*

**Would you like to receive our quarterly newsletters via Email?**

If so, fill out the form below and drop it in to us at Warby Street  
(or fill out one at reception).

Name: .....  
(first name) (surname)

Postal Address: .....

Email Address: .....

## Travelling with your Pet!

As 14% of Australians take their pet with them on weekend getaways and with the school holidays coming up, we thought this would be quite a pertinent topic!

*How do I decide if I should take my pet?*

- If your dog is a barker, anti-social or a poor traveller, then maybe a boarding kennel is the best choice.
- You should always check before you place your pet in a boarding situation. If it smells bad then it is no place for your pet. Also check, are the water bowls bright and clean? Are the staff really pet lovers?
- Leaving your pets with friends can end friendships. Have clear binding agreements about where responsibility lies before any arrangements are made.

*How do I prepare my pet for travelling?*

- If your pet is going to be a regular traveller in the car it is good to get them used to this from the very beginning. This means starting them on short trips in the car, i.e. around the block or down the street. Then start to increase the time they spend in the car so they get used to it.
- It is good to have a reward for pets when they behave in the car as they then associate travelling with a good experience.
- Make sure your pet's vaccinations are up to date. Also check the destination with your local vet, in case your pet needs extra protection, e.g. ticks or heartworm.

*What to do on the day:*

- On departure day, try to fit your departure time in with your pet's daily routine.
- Always give your pet the opportunity to relieve itself before travelling.
- Take a 'pooper scooper' for dogs and a litter tray for cats.
- Be aware that without adequate ventilation animals left in cars can quickly die from heat exhaustion - even on moderately warm days.
- Take their favourite toy and/or blanket to make your pet as comfortable as possible. Don't forget a leash.
- When travelling with dogs, stop every two hours and exercise them.
- Do not feed your animal on the day you leave. Make sure you have fresh water; it is best if it comes from the home supply.
- Restrain them well in the vehicle. Car harnesses are a great idea and very safe.

*Keeping your animal safe and comfortable while on holidays.*

- Dogs will generally be quite excited by the prospect of new territory to explore. When you arrive, walk the dog around its new area and familiarise it with its holiday home.
- Cats are more likely to be unsettled, so ensure that your cat can be confined until it is relaxed and obviously adjusted to its new environment.
- Ensure your pet is in a space where they can not run away and become lost in unfamiliar surroundings.
- In case your pet should become lost, ensure that it is wearing a collar and a tag with a phone number which can be reached while you're away.

Hope you enjoy travelling with your pets!

### Microchipping

Microchipping is now compulsory for all new council registrations. It's also a great idea, your pet can't lose a microchip!!

Warby Street has a discount for microchips at the moment,

**\$31.50 that's \$25 off!!**

## Tetanus and Strangles Vaccination in Horses

We have found that a lot of our clients aren't up to date with vaccination for both tetanus and strangles. When vaccination isn't up to date both diseases can have devastating effects. Strangles is highly contagious and may result in large outbreaks of the disease; the disease can be more easily controlled if vaccination current. If an unvaccinated horse contracts tetanus it will more than likely result in death.

### Tetanus

Occurs when a wound becomes infected with spores of bacteria called *Clostridium tetani* which is commonly found in soil. The spores produce a toxin that causes stiffness of leg muscles that advances to cause paralysis of the respiratory muscles quickly leading to death. Horses are very susceptible to the tetanus toxin.

Treatment of tetanus is difficult, time-consuming, expensive and often unsuccessful. Regular vaccination is highly effective in providing long-term protection against this fatal disease.

### Strangles

This is a respiratory disease of horses caused by bacteria called *Streptococcus equi* which is highly contagious. The bacteria are easily spread by direct contact between horses, equipment, tack and feed. Some horses can carry the bacteria for many months and can be the cause of large outbreaks of the disease.

Strangles bacteria causes fever, depression, discharge from the nose and swollen glands around the lower jaw. At worst, it can cause pneumonia and death. Annual vaccination and good hygiene will reduce the severity of symptoms and also reduce the spread of infection during an outbreak.

### Vaccination protocol to follow for protecting against Tetanus and Strangles

<u>Foals</u>	<u>Protocol</u>	<u>Vaccine</u>
	1 <sup>st</sup> vacc @ 12 weeks of age 2 <sup>nd</sup> vacc @ 14 weeks (2 weeks later) 3 <sup>rd</sup> vacc @ 16 weeks (2 weeks later) Yearly booster @ 16 months of age Ongoing protection	Tetanus & Strangles Strangles Tetanus & Strangles Tetanus & Strangles Tetanus every 24 months, Strangles every 12 months.
<u>Unvaccinated adult horses</u>	1 <sup>st</sup> vacc @ any age 2 <sup>nd</sup> vacc 2 weeks later 3 <sup>rd</sup> vacc 2 weeks later Yearly booster 12 months later Ongoing protection	Tetanus & Strangles Strangles Tetanus & Strangles Tetanus & Strangles Tetanus every 24 months, Strangles every 12 months.
<u>Vaccinated Pregnant Mares</u>	No less than 2 weeks before foaling	Tetanus & Strangles
<u>Unvaccinated Pregnant Mares</u>	Start adult protocol no less than 8 weeks before foaling.	Tetanus & Strangles

## *“King Valley Run”*

A service provided every **Tuesday** charging **TRAVEL fees** from Glenrowan, Greta, Moyhu or Milawa.

## *“Beechworth & Myrtleford Valley Run”*

A service provided every **Thursday** charging **TRAVEL fees** from Markwood, Everton, Beechworth and Myrtleford