

Hendra Virus Risk Management Procedure

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

(1) This Procedure outlines requirements at The University of Queensland (UQ) for conducting work with horses or horse tissue that may be exposed to Hendra virus. The purpose of the Procedure is to minimise the risk of human exposure to Hendra virus or horses infected with the virus by ensuring work with horses or horse tissue complies with UQ's Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) and UQ's Animal Ethics Committee requirements.

(2) This Procedure applies to:

- a. All staff, students, visitors, volunteers, and contractors (UQ workers) conducting work with any horses or horse tissue on UQ campuses or premises, including:
 - i. UQ's Gatton Campus and Pinjarra Hills Campus; and
 - ii. UQ Equine Specialist Hospital, Veterinary Medical Centre at Gatton or UQ Vets Dayboro.
- b. All horses and horse tissue (including UQ-owned horses and horses owned by UQ workers) brought onto UQ campuses or premises for any purpose.

Context

(3) UQ has a legal obligation under the Queensland [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#) to ensure that the health and safety of its workers is not put at risk from work carried out as part of the conduct of UQ's business or undertaking.

(4) The Queensland Government publishes [guidance material](#) for veterinarians and others potentially exposed to Hendra virus.

(5) This Procedure supports, and should be read in conjunction with, UQ's School of Veterinary Science's Hendra virus risk management protocols and local standard operating procedures available from the School's Safety Manager.

Section 2 - Process and Key Controls

(6) UQ workers must comply with the following measures when conducting work on horses or horse tissue at UQ:

- a. Ensure a workplace risk assessment is undertaken to identify potential occupational health and safety risks and how they will be managed.
- b. Ensure all horses entering UQ campuses or premises satisfy the vaccination or exclusion requirement outlined in this Procedure and that supporting documentation is provided (refer to clauses 9-14).
- c. Notify Biosecurity Queensland of Hendra virus infection or suspected infection of horses.

Section 3 - Key Requirements

Risk Assessment and Management

(7) UQ considers managing occupational health and safety risk as an ongoing, continuously improving process.

Organisational Units are responsible for ensuring that:

- a. all work with horses or horse tissue is assessed for risks associated with the work prior to commencement of the work; and
- b. identified risks are monitored and managed throughout the duration of the work.

(8) Organisational Units' risk assessments must be conducted in accordance with the [Health and Safety Risk Assessment Procedure](#) and include consideration of potential exposure to Hendra virus, particularly in areas where horses may come into contact with flying foxes. For example, in areas where fruiting trees are located near horse yards, replacement of trees for non-flying fox attracting species or removal of fruiting bracts prior to fruiting may need to be considered.

Vaccination

(9) UQ adopts the vaccine scheduling protocol issued by the [Australian Veterinary Association](#) (AVA) for healthy microchipped horses over four months of age. UQ workers must follow all locally stipulated vaccination schedules.

(10) Consistent with the AVA's recommendations, UQ requires all horses brought onto UQ campuses or premises to be vaccinated for Hendra virus or undergo exclusion testing to determine Hendra virus status.

(11) UQ workers must ensure that owners or handlers of all horses coming onto UQ owned premises provide:

- a. proof of completion of Hendra virus vaccination schedule; or
- b. results of exclusion testing confirming Hendra virus negative status of the horse.

(12) Documentation to confirm the vaccination status of horses must be provided to:

- a. the UQ Gatton Campus Equine Unit Coordinator - for any horse brought onto the UQ Gatton Campus for teaching or research at the Equine Unit, or any purpose other than admission to the Equine Specialist Hospital for veterinary or other service; or
- b. the nominated staff member within the relevant Organisational Unit - for any horse brought onto other UQ campuses or premises.

(13) When unvaccinated horses are brought onto UQ owned premises, protocols for each area must be applied.

(14) Students are responsible for meeting Hendra vaccination requirements for their horses and the associated costs.

Notification of Infection

(15) UQ workers that suspect a horse is infected with Hendra virus must notify UQ Biosafety Advisors in Health, Safety and Wellness Division as soon as possible (biosafety@uq.edu.au). The Director, Health, Safety and Wellness will notify Biosecurity Queensland. UQ workers must refer to the [Workplace Health and Safety Queensland](#) and [Biosecurity Queensland](#) guidelines when handling horses known or suspected to be infected with Hendra virus.

Section 4 - Roles, Responsibilities and Accountabilities

Heads of Organisational Units Authorised to Conduct Work

(16) Heads of Organisational Units that undertake work with horses or horse tissue must work with Chief Investigators, Principal Investigators, Academic Course Coordinators and UQ workers to ensure:

- a. suitable facilities are available and maintained to comply with relevant legislative requirements (i.e. ensuring appropriate spaces to quarantine animals suspected of Hendra virus infection, including funding and arrangements for maintenance, routine testing and servicing);
- b. work with horses or horse tissue is conducted in compliance with any relevant legislative or UQ requirements (e.g. ensuring all horses meet vaccination requirements and that suspected cases of Hendra virus are appropriately notified);
- c. implementation of this Procedure within the Organisational Unit, including ensuring all associated local standard operating procedures are available to UQ workers and reviewed regularly to reflect current requirements;
- d. periodic auditing of the vaccination status of horses located within facilities of the Organisational Unit, or horses or horse tissue used by UQ workers in the Organisational Unit; and
- e. horse ownership and vaccination records are maintained as required under section 6 of this Procedure.

Research Group Leaders / Chief Investigators / Principal Investigators / Academic Course Coordinators

(17) When undertaking work with horses or horse tissue, research group leaders, Chief Investigators, Principal Investigators and Academic Course Coordinators must ensure:

- a. appropriate facilities are available for the type of work to be conducted and the facilities are maintained in compliance with requirements (e.g. access to appropriate spaces to quarantine animals suspected of Hendra virus infection); and
- b. any horses or horse tissue brought onto a UQ Campus or being worked on by UQ workers is compliant with the key requirements listed in section 3 of this Procedure.

UQ Gatton Equine Unit Coordinator

(18) The UQ Gatton Equine Unit Coordinator must work with Chief Investigators, Principal Investigators, Academic Course Coordinators and UQ workers to ensure:

- a. the Hendra virus vaccination status of horses used in teaching or research activities are compliant with this Procedure and current Hendra virus management procedures; and
- b. records of Hendra virus vaccination status or results of exclusion testing confirming Hendra virus negative status are obtained prior to a horse entering the UQ campus or premises.

UQ Workers

(19) All UQ workers that work with horses or horse tissue at UQ are responsible for:

- a. ensuring vaccination or proof of negative Hendra virus status is confirmed, and supporting documentation provided as outlined in clauses 9-14 prior to bringing any horse onto UQ campuses or premises, or commencing work with horse tissue;
- b. following relevant local protocols when working with unvaccinated horses;
- c. using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and practicing good personal hygiene and biosecurity practices when dealing with any horse, particularly sick or unvaccinated animals; and
- d. notifying a UQ Biosafety Advisor if a suspected case of Hendra virus is identified.

(20) In addition, UQ workers based at the UQ Equine Specialist Hospital, Veterinary Medical Centre at Gatton or UQ Vets Dayboro are responsible for ensuring:

- a. current Hendra virus risk management procedures and local protocols are in place and enforced;
- b. records of Hendra virus vaccination status, or results of exclusion testing confirming Hendra virus negative

status, of horses being treated by UQ workers are maintained; and

- c. students undertaking placements at all UQ Veterinary Teaching Hospitals are aware of the risks involved with suspected Hendra virus positive horses and the PPE required to handle these animals as per directions from clinicians as deemed appropriate.

(21) UQ workers that work with horses or horse tissue at locations external to UQ must comply with the local procedures and requirements of the external organisation.

Health, Safety and Wellness Division (HSW Division)

(22) The Health, Safety and Wellness Division is responsible for:

- a. providing UQ workers with education, advice and support regarding biosafety and biosecurity compliance obligations at UQ; and
- b. assessing whether Organisational Units and UQ workers are able to demonstrate compliance with this Procedure and ensuring that any compliance issues identified are rectified in a timely manner.

(23) Biosafety Advisors within the Health, Safety and Wellness Division are responsible for:

- a. advising UQ workers about specific biosafety matters affecting UQ, including Hendra virus management obligations and regulatory compliance;
- b. reporting to, or advising, the IBC on matters regarding Hendra virus management as required; and
- c. liaising with regulators with respect to UQ's Biosecurity compliance obligations (including hosting regulator site visits or inspections).

Section 5 - Monitoring, Review and Assurance

Compliance

(24) Heads of Organisational Units and the UQ Gatton Equine Unit Coordinator will monitor UQ workers' compliance with horse vaccination or testing requirements outlined in this Procedure and report any actual, or potential, non-compliance with this Procedure to UQ Biosafety Advisors (biosafety@uq.edu.au) in the Health, Safety and Wellness Division.

(25) UQ Biosafety Advisors will monitor and review UQ's biosafety systems and controls on behalf of the IBC, including annual audits and inspections of research and teaching facilities approved by the IBC to conduct work falling under the scope of this Procedure.

(26) UQ Biosafety Advisors will review this Procedure as required to ensure it remains relevant and current.

Non-compliance

(27) UQ workers that do not comply with this Procedure will be subject to corrective actions from the IBC and/or the Health, Safety and Wellness Division, and suspension of work if conditions are not met.

(28) UQ may be subject to corrective actions or notices issued by the Queensland Government to suspend work that does not comply with regulatory requirements.

Section 6 - Recording and Reporting

(29) Organisational Units that work with horses or horse tissue are responsible for ensuring vaccination (refer to clauses 9-14) and horse ownership records are:

- a. collected, securely held and released only to authorised persons (including biosecurity regulators); and
- b. retained for 12 months after the horse or horse tissue has left the UQ campus or premises, or UQ workers are no longer working with the horse or horse tissue.

(30) The Director, Health, Safety and Wellness is responsible for reporting any matters required by the [Biosecurity Act 2014](#) or [Public Health Act 2005](#) to Biosecurity Queensland or Queensland Health as appropriate in relation to this Procedure.

Section 7 - Appendix

Related Documents

(31) Related documents include:

- a. Protocols for Hendra Virus Risk Management in School of Veterinary Science and Gatton Campus, (May 2019).
- b. The University of Queensland, School of Veterinary Science Biosecurity and Infection Control Procedures: Equine Specialist Hospital (Gatton) (June 2018).

Definitions

Term	Definition
Hendra Virus	A viral disease, carried by flying-foxes which may be passed on to horses. Hendra virus can be passed on to humans who have been in close contact with an infected horse.
UQ Workers	For the purposes of this Procedure includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• UQ Staff, including continuing, fixed-term and casual staff;• contractors, subcontractors and consultants;• students enrolled at UQ, including post graduate researchers, Higher Degree by Research students and undergraduate students;• visiting academics and researchers;• visiting research students; and• volunteers engaged by UQ that may be required to work with horses or horse tissue.

Status and Details

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