

## **Release from the New Zealand Equine Health Association on the current outbreaks of Equine Influenza in the Northern Hemisphere.**

The New Zealand Equine Health Association (NZEHA) is aware of a cessation of racing in the UK due to a number of outbreaks of Equine influenza. Other countries are likewise reporting outbreaks. This is perhaps not unexpected as Equine Influenza is endemic in all countries except Australia, New Zealand and Iceland. Vaccines are used to control the disease in endemic countries but unless at least 90% of the population is regularly vaccinated and no new strains are introduced then Equine Influenza will still circulate in the unvaccinated horses. As with all the flu viruses the vaccine must contain the same strain as the circulating virus as protection is relatively short lived and very strain specific.

The import health testing and requirements already in place for New Zealand are designed to manage the risk of entry of Equine influenza, and many other organisms exotic to the New Zealand horse population. Currently when horses from Equine Influenza endemic countries such as the UK, EU and North America enter New Zealand they must have completed three weeks pre export isolation and two weeks of post arrival quarantine before release into the New Zealand population. During these quarantine periods the horse is tested on three separate occasions using the most accurate test currently available looking for evidence of most strains of the virus. If any horse on the consignment tests positive no horse in the consignment can be released without further quarantine. A number of other checks are in place such as daily temperature checks, vaccination history verification and veterinary inspections.

In addition the NZEHA and its Government Industry Association partner the Ministry for Primary Industries focus effort at monitoring the equine diseases circulating in New Zealand. And continually updates its plans and strategies for dealing with new disease incursions.

The Ministry for Primary Industries is currently updating the Import Health Standard for importation of horses into New Zealand and the NZEHA is working closely with them to ensure we manage the complex tangle of disease risks that arise when we import horses, semen and embryos into New Zealand.

Links to information on the latest UK equine influenza (EI) situation are included below.

<https://www.beva.org.uk/News-Archive/entryid/1078/uk-equine-influenza-outbreaks-reported-in-2019>

<https://www.aht.org.uk/disease-surveillance/equiflunet/equiflunet-for-vets>