

MEDIA RELEASE

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Quarantine controls tightened after pet dog infected with Hendra virus

The first NSW case of Hendra virus (HeV) infection in a pet dog has resulted in the State's authorities introducing strict quarantine measures for all companion animals during outbreaks.

The case and the measures introduced to respond to it are outlined in the latest issue of the journal *Public Health Research & Practice*, published today.

Hendra virus was detected in the dog during an outbreak in July 2013, which affected four properties on the NSW mid-north coast. The four-year-old terrier had close contact with an infected horse on one of the properties and remained well apart from periods of sporadic yelping. Testing confirmed infection and the dog was euthanased. Its owners were not infected.

"This is only the second known case of a dog being infected with Hendra virus – the other suspected case was in Queensland in 2011," said the paper's lead author, Dr Sherly Halim, now a Public Health Registrar with the Department of Community Paediatrics at South Western Sydney Local Health District.

"The incident in NSW highlighted two things – that pets on Hendra-affected properties are a potential infection risk to humans and that there were possible gaps in our existing HeV risk assessment and risk management procedures. To address these gaps, we worked collaboratively with the NSW Department of Primary Industries to amend quarantine requirements for companion animals during a HeV outbreak."

Under the upgraded quarantine requirements, any companion animals that have been potentially exposed to HeV from a sick horse or a confirmed case must be isolated.

Dogs for example, must be held in a secure yard or tied up, and cats confined to a cage or a secure area such as a garage or shed. Only a limited number of adults should have contact with the quarantined animal and only for the purposes of feeding or performing other tasks essential to the animal's welfare. The requirements also specify that strict personal protective equipment must be worn.

In response to the case, NSW Health also developed a tool to assess risk for people with potentially infected pets. This includes assessing the frequency and type of contact between owner and pet, how often owners wash their hands after dealing with animal waste and whether the pet has licked their face.

Hendra virus fast facts

- Formerly known as equine morbillivirus, HeV is transmitted by flying foxes. Exactly how it is transmitted from bats to horses is unknown, but it is thought pasture or feed contaminated with bodily fluids from infected bats could be the cause.
- It was first detected in 1994 at horse stables in the Brisbane suburb of Hendra where 20 horses and two people were infected.
- It has a high mortality rate – four of the seven people known to have contracted HeV have died.
- All of the known cases in humans and horses have occurred in northeast NSW and Queensland.
- There have been two cases in NSW in 2015 – one in Lismore this month and one in Murwillumbah in June.
- A Hendra virus vaccine for horses was released in 2012.

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Download the embargoed paper: [Outbreak-related Hendra virus infection in a NSW pet dog](#)

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