

The new Import Health Standard (IHS) for horses from Australia to New Zealand was implemented on 6th January 2009, approximately 16 months after Equine Influenza arrived in Australia.

The New Zealand borders were closed for Australian horses after the Equine Influenza outbreak on 25 August 2007 and it was not until May 2008 that our borders re-opened. From May to December 2008 all horses returning to New Zealand had to complete a 5-week quarantine period as well as a course of vaccinations, making the logistical process extremely long and very expensive.

New quarantine farms were established in both New Zealand and Australia to cope with the large number of horses as well as the different requirements of weanlings, colts, broodmares, racehorses etc, the subtle differences of these horses making an ideal property difficult to find.

The introduction of the new IHS, being basically the same as it was pre-EI, is a welcome relief for all concerned with the travel companies now not having the responsibility and expense of the lengthy quarantine requirements and the owners also have the luxury of cheaper prices and the flexibility of travelling horses freely between the two countries.

The new IHS requires an EIA test for all horses (not including foals still suckling) and an EVA test for colts older than 12 months of age. All horses must also have a worm drench and be sprayed prior to departure to New Zealand.

The lead-in time required for a horse to be ready for export from Australia to New Zealand is approximately 7-10 days, depending on flight schedules and laboratory setup dates.

Many studs isolate horses for a period of time once they arrive from Australia and other overseas destinations, and all owners / breeders / trainers are encouraged to follow this practice

It has been observed over the last 7 months of quarantine was that a significant number of horses, especially young horses during the winter, have arrived in New Zealand with minor colds, running noses etc. They do clear up relatively quickly however, but they can be quite contagious at times as the horses were closely stabled in the quarantine environment.