

Media Release



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Import health standard for horses from Australia out for consultation

MAF Biosecurity New Zealand (MAFBNZ) has released a draft Import Health Standard (IHS) for Horses from Australia for public consultation.

Horse imports from Australia were halted in August 2007 after MAF BNZ received confirmation from the Australian Government of equine influenza outbreaks in New South Wales and Queensland.

MAF BNZ has been working closely with the Equine Health Association (EHA) and key industry representatives to develop new import conditions for horses from Australia that will protect New Zealand from this highly contagious virus.

Import Standards Group Manager, Clive Gower Collins, said that new import conditions had to be practical and acceptable to the horse industry, which will bear the cost of tighter import conditions.

The draft IHS is in accordance with agreements between the exporting country, Australia, and New Zealand and sets out following requirements:

- Horses must be vaccinated against equine influenza between 42 and 120 days prior to export.
- Horses must be held for at least 21 days immediately prior to export to New Zealand in approved Pre-Export Isolation (PEI) premises, where they will undergo two PCR tests, at least five days apart, for equine influenza.
- Upon arrival in New Zealand horses must remain in a transitional facility for at least 14 days, where they will undergo a PCR test for equine influenza.
- Horses must have resided on properties free of equine influenza for three months prior to export.

Assuming eradication of equine influenza in Australia is successful, these measures are likely to be reduced further in the future.

“It has taken considerable time to get to this point and we are mindful of the number of owners who are patiently waiting for their horses to be allowed to return home. All going well, we hope to see the new IHS in place by the end of April”, Mr Gower Collins said.

The draft Import Health Standard for Horses from Australia is available at <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/strategy-and-consultation/consultation/horses-from-australia>. The closing date for submission is 10 March 2008.

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