

Adapting to the Equine Influenza Situation

No-one knows how long it will be before horse movement restrictions and permits for movement are decided. We have to make the best of the knowledge that we have, and care for our horses on a day-to-day basis as we watch the epidemic unfold, and (hopefully) close.

Advice given in this bulletin is current as of 28.08.07. Horse managers need to keep in touch with changes henceforth.

The regulatory authorities are keeping everyone informed (more than once per day), and can be linked via the web (see below). There will be press releases at least once every day.

For every horse manager (and, very importantly, for **every horse attendant**) there are issues to be considered. The impact of the disease and its control is different for each management situation:

1. Horses trained entirely at home or at a private training facility will be largely unaffected, except for the need for **handler awareness of hygiene**.
2. Horses stabled and trained at training tracks, or within walking distance of training tracks, are themselves unaffected, but there are extreme needs for **handler awareness of hygiene**.
3. Horses trained partly at a private track and partly at a public track will need changes to their **exercise program** and in many cases changes to their **nutrition program**.
4. Horses stabled in a small yard, dependent on road transport to their training venue, will need serious and difficult changes to both their **exercise program** and their **nutrition program**.
5. Horses not in work need to stay put while their managers watch for press releases, and be aware of **hygiene & quality control** in feed, tack, & bedding.

Some notes on management procedures:

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|-------------------------|-------------|
| A. Hygiene & quarantine | B. Energy |
| C. Essential nutrients | D. Exercise |

A. Hygiene & quarantine

Keep in touch with media releases e.g. www.outbreak.gov.au. The hygiene instructions are clearly stated. There are some other precautions worth remembering e.g.:

Keep equipment segregated – don't use the same bridle or grooming equipment on different horses.

Don't kiss horses (this may sound silly, but the Hendra trainer who died along with several of his horses in 1994 was well-known for kissing his horses)

If your family attend to horses at different locations, try to appoint one person per location and don't change it. This does not remove the need to shower, disinfect and change between visits.

B. Energy

If horses have to have a reduction in work due to reduced availability of training space, then they should have a reduction in energy intake. The approximate intakes for a 500 kg horse (mega joules/day) are Idle 85; leisure 90; pre train 105; early full training 120; race fit 130-150. You can see that a horse in full work to suddenly be confined to a yard and/or stable needs a sudden reduction in energy.

Sound feeding management almost always includes gradual changes in diet, but when there is a sudden change in workload the diet change has to be more rapid than ideal.

Rather than simply reduce the amount of grain, replace it with hay and chaff, so that the total volume of daily feed stays approximately the same.

Smaller reductions in energy requirement could be accommodated by changing from grain to a lower energy feed e.g. Mitavite Xtra-Cool.

C. Essential nutrients

Essential amino acids, vitamins and trace minerals are all necessary to keep the horse's immune system and antibody production at maximum efficiency, so if a reduction in hard feed is necessary because of a reduction in work, change to a more concentrated source of essential nutrients, e.g.:

Mitavite Sustaina, Mitavite Racegro – change to Mitavite Athlete Plus with added roughage.

Mitavite Formula 3, Mitavite XLR8 – change to Mitavite Promita plus added roughage.

For a more severe reduction in energy change to Vitamite Super Amino 66 with added roughage.

Horses which have to suffer a sudden change in diet (e.g. a racehorse injured during a race and immediately confined to box rest in a horse hospital) do very well on a diet of hay and chaff and Vitamite Super Amino 66.

If you are unfortunate enough to have Equine Influenza in your stable, remember that Vitamite Super Amino 66 is designed to help recovery to the maximum. It is used in many of the major Equine Hospitals throughout Australia. If loss of appetite is one of the symptoms, use Vitamite Anazolic, the only product registered in Australia for treatment of poor appetite. (Vitamite Super Amino 66 also contains Anazolic).

D. Exercise

If horse movement restrictions mean that a young horse cannot do fast work, or must work on a soft home track rather than a firm public track, there will be a reduction in development of bone strength if the restriction lasts many weeks. This can be partially alleviated by a change in approach.

Development of weight-carrying limbs requires a mixture of speed, rider weight and concussion. To minimise the occurrence of shin-soreness and related problems we recommend gradual mixtures of the 3 factors – i.e. at first, on fast days, avoid the hardest tracks and use a light rider, then on slow days, use the hard track and a heavy rider.

If a fast track is not available, more weight with larger saddles and heavier riders should help keep bone development going while we are waiting for the restrictions to be lifted.

In the unfortunate cases where there is no access to any type of exercise area, walking the horses around the yard will be better than leaving them in boxes.

The other website to keep watching for news is www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/equine-influenza

For further assistance contact Mitavite on 1800 025 487.