

Basic Steps to Preventing the Spread of Horse Flu

1. Keep your horse(s) at home or wherever they are currently situated. Even if your horses are well and you do not think they could have horse flu, do not attempt to move them even if you think there is a safer, a better or a more convenient place to keep them.
2. Look after your own horse(s) but avoid visiting horses at other places, even if they belong to friends and even if you think the other horses are well and not at risk of having horse flu. The greatest risk of spread is horse people visiting other horse people and / or horses!
3. Likewise, until the epidemic is over, don't allow other people to visit your horses.
4. If you have absolutely no alternative to visiting other horses venues or horses (eg you work there or need to feed someone else's horses) please shower and wash carefully and put on a completely fresh set of clothes (including shoes) after contact with your own horses and before you go to the other horses. Please repeat the process when you leave the other horses before you come home to your own horses. Do not put discarded clothes on again before washing them. Wash your clothes in a full wash cycle and scrub your shoes with a disinfectant for 5 minutes.
5. Horse equipment (saddles, bridles, rugs, feedbins, farrier tools, horse dentist equipment, vet equipment etc) are very difficult to disinfect and should only be used within one horse establishment / farm.
6. Horse flu is so infectious that you can safely assume that if one horse in your stables / farm has the disease, all the horses will get it. Precautions within your stables / farm are not necessary – but it is crucial that we cease the contact between horses in different stables / farms until the epidemic dies down.
7. If you suspect that your horse has horse flu (a deep hacking cough is the main symptom, but horses may have a temperature [normal horse temperature is 37.5 degrees to 38.5 degrees], a runny nose or be unwell) please contact your local vet. It is possible that your vet may be unable to attend your horses due to the scale of the epidemic – if so please ring the Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.
8. Stay up to date on the epidemic by regularly (each day at least) visiting your horse organisation website or the Australian Horse Industry Council Website www.horsecouncil.org.au. If you register on the Horse Emergency Contact Database (HECD) at www.horsecouncil.org.au you will receive updates by email.

(Prepared by Dr Vince Roche)