EQUINE INFLUENZA UPDATE

K. Hart DISTRICT VETERINARIAN

* The Equine Influenza eradication campaign is moving so fast that any update will be old news. This information is current as at 11th February.

* The EI restricted zone in NSW has now contracted to the purple zone with a thin adjoining rim of amber and red zones. The rest of NSW is now classified as a white zone. Areas within the Moss Vale RLPB which are now white include the local government areas of Shoalhaven, Kiama, Shellharbour and part of Wingecarribee Shire.

* A travelling horse statement must be downloaded from the NSW DPI website for any horse movements within the purple or white zones. The website is www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/horse/influenza

A major effort has been mounted to test horse properties within the purple zone. Negative results will confirm to the other States and the international community that EI has been eradicated from NSW. There are 2 surveys in the purple zone:

**PURPLE TO GREEN SURVEY:** 1860 horse properties in the purple zone have been randomly selected and all horses on the property (up to 200) are sampled for EI virus. The survey included 620 properties in the Sydney Basin. The survey is almost complete with negative results to date. Congratulations to the staff and vets involved and particularly to the horse owners who so willingly allowed their horses to be tested (the survey was voluntary).

**LAST 10 INFECTED PROPERTY SURVEY:** This is a very powerful survey which involves going back to the last known 60 EI infected properties in the purple zone (including 20 properties in the Sydney Basin). The horses on these properties are tested, as well as any horses on adjoining properties to ensure that EI no longer exists on these properties. This survey was nearly 80% complete at the time of writing.

No cases of Equine Influenza have been confirmed in NSW since Christmas 2007. At this stage, the target date for the purple zone to go green is the end of February 2008, with EI eradication completed at the end of March 2008. So far so good...
Organisations UNITE to Target Feral Animals.

It is a pleasure to announce that the Moss Vale Rural Lands Protection Board and Landcare Illawarra have united to tackle feral animals in a joint control program for 2008 and partially into 2009 aimed at the northern areas of the Kiama Local Government area.

Cooperating with Landcare in such a program is a first for the Moss Vale RLPB in what is hoped to be one of many to come. There is already discussion of an additional program to target other known feral animals in the Illawarra.

In late January nearly 200 invitation letters were mailed to property owners of more than 2 Ha north of Saddle Back Mountain, east of Knights Hill and south of the Minnamurra River through to the coastal townships of Minnamurra, Kiama Downs, Kiama and Kiama Heights.

The program will primarily focus on the control of foxes but will also target other known feral animals. Participants will be involved with baiting, trapping and professional shooting. Workshops will be conducted to help landholders understand what they can do to control feral animals on their property.

Moss Vale RLPB Ranger Daniel Shaw said “We hope to make clear to all landholders involved in this program the importance of controlling feral animals and the need to do it in a coordinated manner that involves a whole area approach as opposed to just a single property.”

Landcare Illawarra Treasurer Michael Swanson says “I am confident that this program will be beneficial and I am pleased to be joining hands with the Moss Vale RLPB in its coordination. Previously Landcare Illawarra was involved in a similar program undertaken in the Foxground area that proved to be very successful. This year’s program uses a similar approach and I urge all invited property owners to become involved”.

Landholders with any questions of this program are encouraged to contact Moss Vale RLPB Ranger Daniel Shaw on 0418 963 808.

Shoalhaven Fox Control

At this time young foxes from last year’s litter are travelling long distances to establish their own territory. This may include your property. Young foxes can often be seen playing in paddocks or walking along roadsides.

Adolescent foxes are very brave at this stage in life and will not hesitate to attack your chooks, ducks, geese, lambs and any other susceptible livestock that you may have.

Northern Shoalhaven landholders have, for a number of years, been participating in a program that aims at controlling foxes using 1080 baits, trapping and shooting. They have experienced positive results.

This successful fox control program is managed by the Shoalhaven City Council and the Moss Vale Rural Lands Protection Board. Each March and September more than 70 landholders become involved in some form of fox control.

The next round of fox baiting will commence in March 2008. Previous participants should expect to be contacted shortly. To secure your participation, and for those who wish to become involved contact Moss Vale RLPB Ranger Daniel Shaw 0418 963 808 or Shoalhaven City Council Natural Resource Officer Greg Thompson 0431133000.
Free chemical collection

Want to get old pesticides and herbicides off your farm and out of the house?

Take them to a free chemical collection organised by the Sydney Catchment Authority (SCA) with support from the Department of Environment and Climate Change (NSW), Wingecarribee Shire Council and Wollondilly Shire Council.

Collection dates are:

- Saturday 29 March 2008 from 9.00am to 4.00pm at Wingecarribee Shire Council Works Depot, Berrima Road, Moss Vale
- Saturday 5 April 2008 from 9.00am to 4.00pm at Wollondilly Shire Council car park, Menangle Street, Picton

The SCA will also undertake collections at Goulburn, Tarago, Braidwood, Crookwell, Taralga and Lithgow during March and April 2008.

Chemicals that can be dropped off include pesticides and herbicides (fungicides, baits/poisons, wood preservatives), paint and paint-related products, solvents and household cleaners, motor oils and fuels, batteries, gas bottles, fire extinguishers, pool and hobby chemicals (photography chemicals etc), acids and alkalis. Only household quantities from non business sources are accepted at the collection. If you intend to drop off larger amounts of chemicals, please call the Clean Out Hotline on 131 555. Once collected, chemicals are made safe, recycled or destroyed.

“By supporting chemical collection programs landowners in the catchments are working to protect their local environment and waterways”, the SCA’s General Manager of Catchment Operations and Major Projects, George Dodds said.

Unwanted chemicals should be packed in secure containers and carefully transported to collection points to ensure chemicals do not leak or spill.

For more information on substances and materials that will be accepted, how to transport chemicals safely, or other collection sites in your region, please call the Clean Out Hotline on 131 555 or go to www.cleanout.com.au.

Brochures containing more details of the collections will be delivered to homes in the relevant council areas and advertisements will appear in local newspapers closer to the collection dates.

NLIS - UPDATE

Reminder - RLPBs are no longer able to process orders for ALLFLEX tags.

This is due to the Government subsidy ending in August 2007.

Orders for ALLFLEX NLIS must now be submitted through ALLFLEX resellers. Please telephone your reseller for their new prices.

LEADER are continuing to allow tag orders to be processed through their local RLPBS and has offered to supply a free applicator to stockholders changing over to LEADER from ALLFLEX.
RLPBs PLAY MAJOR ROLE IN Equine Influenza RESPONSE

Although the number of Equine Influenza (EI) cases has significantly decreased in recent weeks Rural Lands Protection Boards (RLPBs) remain busier than ever in their efforts to help control and eradicate the disease.

Chairman Stuart Yeatman said staff would continue to play a crucial role over the coming months with exhaustive testing and vaccination programs to clear NSW of the devastating horse flu. “The response to EI has been a massive undertaking with more than 300 RLPB personnel from the majority of the 47 Boards across the State working with the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and other agencies since the outbreak began more than three and a half months ago. RLPB Veterinarians, Rangers and support staff have been involved in operations at the Local Disease Control Centre (LDCC) at the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute near Camden, on the ground in Restricted Area hot spots, at vaccination centres and also at the State Disease Control Headquarters (SDCHQ) in Orange. They have been working in a range of roles including veterinary investigations, zone progression, and property clearance and surveillance,” the Chairman said.

Staff are being rotated so involvement can be sustained for the long haul as well as maintaining a presence in their local districts, and the commitment by Boards has been incredible with many staff working long stints away from families and homes. “We are the only state where Boards provide a front line animal health service and support for exotic disease outbreaks such as EI. With more than 40,000 infected horses this has been a huge undertaking. “Our contribution has demonstrated how vital local knowledge and the technical expertise of RLPB staff has been in the EI response,” he said.

Local Boards have also been heavily involved in a number of other activities to support the EI response. They are the first point of contact for any horse movement permit enquiries. The approval process has recently been streamlined with RLPBs now having the authority to issue movement permits in the amber zone within their Board district. More than 7500 horse movement permits have been issued since the EI standstill was initiated however Boards and the LDCC have fielded more than double this number of enquiries. Data collected by Boards from land and stock returns has also been incredibly important for planning purposes in identifying the location and number of horses on large properties across NSW.

RLPBs have also been involved in community EI meetings to help deliver information relevant and timely to the local area.

New South Wales Dairy Industry Conference REBATE

NSW NLIS DAIRY REBATE SCHEME

The NSW NLIS Dairy Rebate Scheme commenced in mid 2004 with a grant to the NSW Dairy Industry Conference by the then Minister for Agriculture, Richard Amery, of $500,000 from the Dairy Industry Contingency Reserve held by the NSW Food Authority. The purpose of the Scheme was to encourage NSW dairy farmers to support the NLIS initiative by offering a rebate on the cost of purchasing tags.

What is the rebate?
A $1 rebate paid for every NLIS device (ear tag or bolus) purchased and used in dairy cows pastured in NSW

How do I claim the rebate?
Purchase your NLIS devises through your regular supplier and keep a copy of the invoice.
Phone for an application form to 63 73 1436 - Complete the application form and the statutory declaration section, send application, statutory declaration and copy of supplier invoice to: Kate McGilvray
Project Officer / Secretariat
NSW Dairy Industry Conference
PO Box 833
Mudgee, NSW 2850

* Rebates will be allocated on a first come first served basis. * You DO NOT need to be involved in herd recording to be eligible
Top dressing with poultry litter can be very beneficial to the productivity of pastures when used wisely. However, there is no regulation of poultry litter and poor quality litter containing bits of carcases and feathers has caused cattle mortalities due to botulism on at least two properties in the Board district in the last 18 months.

The following guideline will assist cattle owners in avoiding the risks from poor quality poultry litter. Further information beyond the scope of this article can be obtained from the NSW DPI Primefact ”Best Practice Guidelines for Using Poultry Litter on Pastures” written by District Agronomist Neil Griffiths and obtainable from the website www.dpi.nsw.gov.au under “poultry litter on pastures”.

Regulations for Cattle Feeding
Due to the risk of transmission of Mad Cow Disease (BSE) to ruminants, it has been made an offence under the Stock Diseases Act to feed or allow cattle to have access to prohibited materials. The definition of “prohibited materials” is
- Meat or any other carcass component
- Bones
- Blood
- Feathers

The maximum fine for a successful prosecution for this offence is $11,000. The State Government obviously believes that cattle should NOT have access to poor quality poultry litter containing carcases and feathers.

Botulism
Apart from the fact that it is illegal, allowing cattle access to poultry litter containing carcases and feathers can also result in botulism. This disease is caused by environmental bacteria, found in soil and carcases, which can produce a very powerful and lethal toxin. Cattle which ingest this toxin usually die and there is no treatment, although there is a vaccine which can protect cattle from developing botulism.

Don’t think for a moment that because they are grass eaters, cattle are not at risk from poultry litter containing carcases or feathers. Cattle are very inquisitive animals and will often lick and chew anything that interests them, including carcases and feathers. It only takes a small amount of highly potent botulism toxin to kill a cow.

Recommendations
The following recommendations are made to avoid breaching the legislation and killing your cattle. Some recommendations are taken from the NSW DPI Primefact referred to above:

- Obtain your poultry litter from a reputable supplier
- Ideally, use composted poultry litter rather than fresh litter - it is a much lower risk
- Do not allow cattle access to poultry litter stockpiles
- Do not graze pastures (for at least three weeks) after spreading poultry litter. If pasture regrowth does not occur within three weeks, then stock should be kept off the paddock until regrowth does occur.
- If you must use fresh poultry litter, in addition to the above guidelines, specify to the supplier that there are to be no feathers or carcases in the litter and that you will not accept delivery if there are.

K G Hart District Veterinarian
Farmers urged to help with livestock disease testing

Local graziers are urged to contact their vet if any cattle or sheep display unusual behaviour so suspect animals’ brains can be used to prove Australia remains free of mad cow disease and scrapie.

The industry maintains access to export markets by continually testing for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), or mad cow disease, and scrapie.

NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) technical specialist for farm product integrity, Sally Spence, said graziers and veterinarians play an important role in monitoring for BSE and scrapie.

"Australia has access to lucrative overseas markets, including the European Union and Japan, because we regularly prove that BSE and scrapie do not occur in Australia," Ms Spence said.

“Producers and veterinarians across the State can work together to help us in this important testing process.”

NSW tests adult animal brains with signs of disease from cattle and sheep each year with producers receiving an incentive payment of $150 for cattle and $25 for sheep.

Ms Spence said any change in the mental status, sensation, posture or movement of animals could indicate brain disease in animals.

“Signs to look for in cattle and sheep include muscle tremor, staggering gait, falling, blindness and paralysis.”

Graziers who notice any of these symptoms should report cases to their NSW DPI, Rural Lands Protection Board (RLPB) or local veterinarian, who is also eligible for a subsidy.

Producers can contact - Sally Spence (02) 6391 3630, for more information about the National Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies Freedom Assurance Program which monitors for BSE in cattle and scrapie in sheep.

Making ¢ents of Pastures Introducing the NEW Sustainable Grazing Program

Providing you with the tools to get the most out of your property -

Pasture Identification Grazing and pasture management Assessing landscapes and soils

Are you interested in learning how to identify the plants on your farm, be they pastures, weeds or other plants?

Do you understand the value of your soils, how to interpret your soil tests, which fertilisers to apply and how much?

Would you like the skills to be able to manage your pastures better?

The Sustainable Grazing Program is an initiative by NSW DPI and the Sydney Catchment Authority to offer best management practices for Grazing in the Sydney drinking water catchments.

The Program offers a choice of subsidised courses to improve the profitability and sustainability of grazing;

PADDOCK PLANTS – teaches you to:
Identify and name the important plants in your paddock.
How much does the course cost?
FREE

LANDSCAN™ – provides skills and tools to:
Understand and manage farm landscapes and soil health issues affecting productivity such as fertility, acidity, salinity and sodicity
How much does the course cost?
$100 (normally $350)

PROGRAZE™ – designed to help you to:
Use animals and their grazing habits to improve the productivity and sustainability of your pastures
How much does the course cost?
$200 (normally $450)

If you are interested in one or more of these courses, would like to find out if you are eligible to receive the course subsidies and would like to register for the next course please contact:

Byron Stein
Project Coordinator - Sustainable Grazing Program
Telephone: (02) 4828 6636
Mobile: 0428 259 628
Fax: (02) 4822 3261
e-mail: byron.stein@dpi.nsw.gov.au