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Current situation

All infected properties continue to be closely monitored and no new Hendra cases have been reported this week.

Following extensive testing and decontamination, quarantine measures were lifted late last week at the first infected property at Mullumbimby. Four properties remain quarantined on the NSW North Coast – three properties in the Ballina area and a second property in Mullumbimby.

All at risk horses on the quarantined properties remain healthy and continue to be monitored. Final laboratory testing will be carried out 32 days following the last contact with the infected horses.

Hendra in NSW snapshot (since 30/6/2011):

- 8 properties have been confirmed positive for the Hendra virus - Wollongbar, Macksville, Lismore, Ballina, South Ballina, two properties at Mullumbimby and North Ballina.
- 10 horse deaths.
- Horses on 186 properties have tested negative for the Hendra virus since 29 June 2011.

Protecting your horse from flying foxes

Stay alert!

NSW DPI advises horse owners to take precautions in areas with flying foxes - to reduce the risk of their horses becoming infected:

- Place feed and water containers under cover.
- Do not place feed and water under trees, especially any trees with fruit.
- Do not use feed that could attract flying foxes, such as apples, carrots, or molasses.
- Remove horses from paddocks where fruiting or flowering trees have temporarily attracted flying foxes.
- If it is not possible to remove the horse from the paddock, tape off the area under the tree.

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The appropriate layout and design of horse paddocks is a key biosecurity consideration for horse owners.

Dr Therese Wright, Project Leader Veterinary Investigations, said Flying foxes are attracted to a wide range of flowering and fruiting trees and vegetation as a food source.

“Bats can be attracted to trees such as fig trees, palms, citrus trees and a range of natives including melaleucas and eucalypts,” Dr Wright said.

“Horse owners should regularly look for flying fox activity in paddocks, including along boundary fences.

“Monitor trees that are about to fruit or flower and look for signs of flying fox activity, including tooth marks on fruit, broken twigs or shoots, and compressed pieces of fruit skin and flesh on the ground under the tree (spats).”

Dr Wright said it's critical that people keep horses away from fruiting and flowering trees that might attract fruit bats.

“Horse owners should remove horses from paddocks where fruiting or flowering trees have temporarily attracted flying foxes,” Dr Wright said.

“Simple things such as not using feed that could attract flying foxes, and not placing feed and water under trees can help minimise the risk of their horses becoming infected.”

More information is available on the NSW DPI Hendra website – www.agriculture.nsw.gov.au/info/hendra

QLD authorities tracking bat movements in Hendra Virus research first

In an Australian first, Queensland scientists are fitting flying foxes with GPS data loggers in an effort to find out where they are going and what they're up to.

Researchers are hoping the new GPS trackers will give them

a greater understanding of how the hendra virus is transmitted.

Transmitting data every five minutes, the trackers are about half the size of a matchbox.

Dr Hume Field, Biosecurity Queensland, says scientists hope to learn which trees attract the bats and whether there's any connection between their movements and areas of hendra outbreaks.

"It's going to be a matter of looking at these movement behaviours, looking at what correlations we can see between various climatic factors," he told the ABC Radio.

"We'll certainly be looking to what has been particularly different in the context of weather and climatic variables this year as opposed to other years."