



The Hon Barry O'Farrell MP

Premier of NSW

Minister for Western Sydney

MEDIA RELEASE

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CROSS-BORDER TASKFORCE TO EXAMINE HENDRA VIRUS

A cross-border task force will be formed to investigate the Hendra virus following a recent spate of cases in NSW and Queensland, NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell and Queensland Premier Anna Bligh announced today.

The taskforce will include Chief Veterinarians, Chief Health Officers and Chief scientists from both states as well as a CSIRO representative.

Mr O'Farrell said the New South Wales-Queensland Taskforce would meet urgently to examine the current Hendra outbreaks and ensure a consistent and coordinated approach in responding to the disease.

"Veterinary, medical and scientific experts will examine the circumstances surrounding recent outbreaks and lead a coordinated cross-border response," Mr O'Farrell said.

"This investigation will include the risks associated with the virus, property and animal biosecurity to avoid infection, education and available science and research, especially vaccine development.

"While Queensland and NSW have already been sharing information on this disease, this Taskforce will formalise that relationship and the response."

NSW Primary Industries Minister Katrina Hodgkinson said there had been two isolated cases of Hendra virus, which can be passed to humans from horses, in northern NSW in the last seven days.

"Flying foxes are known to spread the disease but there has been no evidence of bat to human or human to human infection," she said.

"This is also an opportunity to study risk factors peculiar to NSW including possible similarities between the recent outbreaks and spike in incidents.

"Given the threat this virus poses, not only to animals, but also to humans, we need to look closely at human risk factors to ensure all is being done to prevent any human cases."

The Cross-Border Hendra Virus Taskforce will include:

- NSW Chief Veterinary Officer Dr Ian Roth
- NSW Chief Medical Officer Dr Kerry Chant
- NSW Chief Scientist Professor Mary O'Kane
- NSW Head of Biosecurity Dr Bruce Christie
- Head of Australian Animal Health Laboratory Professor Martyn Jeggo

The NSW Government's Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute (EMAI) identified both NSW cases of Hendra virus after the Livestock Health and Pest Authority and a private veterinarian took samples from horses.

The Department of Primary Industries and NSW Health have been working closely to manage the isolated outbreaks. Both outbreaks occurred on properties where horses have come into contact with the virus via flying foxes.

Both Wollongbar and Macksville properties are under quarantine and the remaining horses at the properties are showing no signs of illness and are being monitored.