

KARAKA QUARANTINE CENTRE POSITIVE TEST RESULTS - QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
How many horses are involved and where did they come from?	Ten horses were imported from the United States on 23 March 2008 and have had conflicting results from tests taken in New Zealand for equine influenza (EI).
Why were tests taken from these horses?	All horses arriving from overseas must enter quarantine and must have tests taken to ensure there is no risk of a disease incursion. Current requirements are designed to identify unwanted viruses and diseases like influenza before horses are cleared.
What is MAF BNZ doing to ensure the results are correct?	The laboratory will be conducting further tests over this weekend (5 & 6 April 2008) to confirm cross-contamination. Further investigations will also be made to ascertain to how the tests in New Zealand became contaminated. MAF Biosecurity New Zealand (MAFBNZ) is retesting samples taken from these horses due to these conflicting test results. The Laboratory is internationally appraised.
Why did tests taken from these imported horses show up negative and then, subsequently, positive?	They tested negative prior to export in the US but positive when in quarantine in New Zealand. All the horses appear healthy and are not showing any symptoms of disease. There is a strong indication that cross-contamination in the laboratory was the reason for the positive results.
Isn't there a ban on horse imports at the moment following the EI outbreak in Australia last year?	There has been a ban on horse imports from Australia only since the outbreak of EI there on 23 August 2007. New Zealand borders have remained open to horse imports from other countries.
Shouldn't we have banned all horse imports from all countries when EI erupted in Australia?	MAF BNZ continuously assesses the risk in consultation with each country on the basis of the risk that each respective country presents. Import Health Standards are managed accordingly while taking into account international movement protocols.
What are the current import protocols for horses?	Under strict import standards horses are required to undergo 21 days quarantine before departure for New Zealand, including testing and vaccination, and a further 14 days in post-arrival quarantine in New Zealand, where they undergo further testing.
What precautions were taken to ensure any potential risk was minimised?	As a precaution MAFBNZ has moved quickly to 'lock down' the Karaka facility. No horses will be allowed to leave or enter the site, and no visitors will be permitted entry.
What levels of risk do these 10 horses in quarantine present?	These horses have been in quarantine since their arrival from the United States in a secure facility, so there is no risk to the New Zealand horse population. MAFBNZ is confident testing over the weekend will confirm that the horses are free from disease. The New Zealand horse population is not at risk as any virus would be contained within the Karaka quarantine facility and allowed to run its course. This is why we have quarantine and these facilities have served us well over the years. In addition, New Zealand introduced Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) to further strengthen our testing in 2003-04. This is a much more sensitive testing procedure than the systems previously in place.