

Equine influenza vaccination goes national

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THE Australian thoroughbred industry and government departments have officially sanctioned and approved the vaccination of the entire thoroughbred population.

The National Management Group met on Monday and a national strategy to vaccinate all horses in Australia was approved.

Australian Racing Board chief executive Andrew Harding said the risk of the spread of EI needed to be minimised and the best insurance policy the industry had was to vaccinate.

"We've tried to contain and eradicate the disease through containment but there's no guarantee that works. We need an insurance policy and that's vaccination," Harding said.

"We believe a permanent vaccination strategy is necessary. We need to eradicate this disease. We've had to make government authorities understand this is a major industry and we can't afford to take any risks. We can't be inactive indefinitely."

Harding said the majority of thoroughbreds in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria had been vaccinated.

"We now need to take out the same insurance in Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania. We've got to do something to ensure we never have to endure such a loss of income. We've got to get the industry back to normal."

Harding said another 200,000 vials of serum would be imported in the next two weeks.

Harding said EI had cost the industry \$4.3 million a day, comprising \$3 million for racing and \$1.3 million for breeding.

There was some good news for the New South Wales racing industry yesterday with tests on horses at Taree on the state's mid-north coast showing they did not have EI.

Racing NSW chief executive Peter V'Landys confirmed the negative results, but said further tests on horses at nearby Port Macquarie, who were found to have elevated temperatures, were still outstanding. An eight-race program has been scheduled for Port Macquarie on Saturday and will be open to both local and Taree-trained horses, provided both venues remain EI-free.