



Media release
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Equine Industry Contingency Planning Group

The New Zealand Racing Board has co-ordinated the formation of an industry planning group to tackle the threat of a possible crises such as an equine influenza outbreak in this country.

The members of the 'Contingency Planning Group' have been drawn from the equine and racing industries and MAF Biosecurity New Zealand (MAFBNZ).

In announcing the composition of the group, the convenor, New Zealand Racing Board chief executive Graeme Hansen says they are pleased to have MAFBNZ on board.

"Their experience and training in the areas of tackling disease outbreaks will be invaluable," he says.

"It is important we are able to draw on the knowledge and experience of the members of equine and racing industries as we work to ensure that we have the best plans possible in place."

The members of the group are Graeme Hansen (New Zealand Racing Board), Thayne Green (NZRB Director), Jennifer Millar (NZ Equestrian Federation), Mike Godber (NZ Metropolitan Trotting Club), Jim Watters (TRAC Racing), Cameron George (New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing), Clive Gower-Collins (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry) and John O'Flaherty (Equine Health Association).

"These people bring a wealth of industry and community insight to the task ahead," Mr Hansen says.

The establishment of this group follows the New Zealand Racing Board-led Equine Influenza Industry Forum, which was held in response to the outbreak of equine influenza in Australia.

Mr Greg Purcell, the chief executive of Equinox Consulting Services Ltd, has been appointed as project manager to lead and co-ordinate activities with the equine industries' different sector groups.

"Mr Purcell has had a long time involvement in the equine industry in Australia. His understanding of both the Australian and New Zealand equine industries has enabled the group to hit the ground running," Mr Hansen says.

"It is important the industry has cohesive risk management and contingency plans in place and increased communication across all sectors. The key to

preventing or controlling outbreaks in New Zealand is the individuals in contact with horses doing the right things.”

“The group is working on a series of workshops to educate and build awareness in the areas of risk of equine influenza infection, clinical symptoms, the immediate on-farm or in-stable response to a suspected infection, hygiene and bio-security procedures and supplies needed in the event of an outbreak,” Mr. Hansen says.

With New Zealand’s horse population never having being exposed to the disease, MAF Biosecurity does not advocate pre-emptive vaccination. It also only holds registration of EI vaccines for emergency use. Meanwhile both MAFBNZ and NZRB have moved to secure supplies of a quantity of vaccines to be held offshore for delivery if needed. This ensures there are a number of vaccines available immediately should circumstances so require.

A website has also been established featuring factsheets, frequently asked questions and information about equine influenza. The website is linked off the home page of the TAB website (www.tab.co.nz).

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