



Media release
2 October 2007

New Zealand Racing Board Hosts Equine Influenza Forum

A broad contingent of representatives from the New Zealand equine and racing community attended an Equine Influenza forum hosted by the New Zealand Racing Board at their Petone offices today.

Among those attending were members from New Zealand's three racing Codes, New Zealand Bloodstock, Racing Clubs, Equine Health Association, MAF BioSecurity, Department of Internal Affairs, Breeders, Trainers, Jockeys, Drivers, Royal Agricultural Society, Equestrian Federation and Riding for the Disabled.

The CEO of the New Zealand Racing Board, Mr Graeme Hansen, said the day was designed to elicit as much information as possible as to the impacts of Equine Influenza on New Zealand.

"It is really important that the industry understands the impact that the outbreak of Equine Influenza in Australia is already having on our economy.

"We also need to ensure that there are proper procedures and contingency plans in place across the whole of the equine spectrum in New Zealand in the event of Equine Influenza reaching our shores."

The New Zealand Racing Industry is a huge contributor to New Zealand producing more than 1.3% of New Zealand's gross domestic product – more than \$1.4 billion in economic activity each year.

"The underlying strength of the industry is in quintessential New Zealand with more than 40,000 people deriving their livelihoods from the racing industry, not to mention accommodation, travel, fashion and entertainment providers who all benefit from the industry's economic wellbeing.

"In addition the export sale of horses generates more than \$120 million each year."

MAF/BNZ officials indicated that they have no plans at this stage to go with a pre-emptive vaccination programme. After robust discussion, the industry personnel acknowledged the difficulties associated with vaccination and agreed to work with MAF/BNZ on these issues.

"There is still a lot of uncertainty around vaccination programmes and the wider implications for New Zealand in relation to trade. The scientific issues

relating to vaccination programmes command careful deliberation,” said Mr Hansen.

A number of wider issues were also discussed and the need for a co-ordinated industry contingency planning group was agreed. As a result, the New Zealand Racing Board will take the lead in the establishment of such a group. This group will follow-up on the issues raised and co-ordinate contingency planning and preparedness.

“Our ability to deal with this situation if it arises in New Zealand is dependent on the industry having a cohesive plan in place,” added Mr Hansen.

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