



NATIONAL HORSE TRACEABILITY SYSTEM REFORM

CONSULTATION INFORMATION

CONSULTATION CLOSES
WEDNESDAY 25 MAY 2022



National
Horse Traceability
Working Group

National Horse Traceability System Reform

The [National Horse Traceability Working Group](#) (NHTWG) is a non-statutory committee constituted by the Agriculture Ministers' Meeting and the Australasian Racing Ministers' Conference to provide advice on matters relating to the design and introduction of a traceability system with a biosecurity focus for horses, donkeys and mules in Australia.

Membership

The NHTWG is chaired by Mr Stuart McLean OAM and includes representatives from:

- Animal Health Australia
- Harness Racing Australia
- Racing Australia
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
- Australian Horse Industry Council
- Equestrian Australia
- The Australian and State and Territory Governments.

Why is there a need for a National Horse Traceability System (NHTS)?

Horses can act as vectors in the spread of infectious diseases, such as Equine Influenza, and other diseases, such as Hendra and Vesicular Stomatitis, that have potentially significant market access and/or human health impacts. In the event of an emergency animal disease outbreak, it is essential that horses of interest can be located quickly and reliably to manage the spread of disease.

Effective tracing enables authorities to promptly deliver preventative measures to reduce the duration of a disease outbreak and provide considerable animal health and commercial benefits. The ability to accurately identify horses is also important when collecting disease surveillance information, including sampling for diagnostic purposes.

Purpose of the NHTWG

The NHTWG is tasked with providing recommendations regarding the implementation of a National Horse Traceability System (NHTS) to the Agriculture Ministers' Meeting in mid-2022.

As part of this work, the NHTWG is:

- a. Considering and making recommendations on the design, introduction, operation, legal framework and enforcement of a traceability system, addressing biosecurity, welfare and broader horse industry and stakeholder needs.

- b. Reviewing existing national livestock and companion animal traceability and register schemes to guide the approach, design and operation of a system for the horse sector.
- c. Reviewing existing horse tracing efforts and data collection arrangements in Australia.
- d. In consultation with stakeholders, considering the funding, policy, legal, communications and compliance requirements to support a proposed NHTS.
- e. In consultation with stakeholders, advising on Business Rules to support a proposed NHTS.
- f. In consultation with stakeholders, developing an indicative timetable for the introduction of a proposed NHTS.

The NHTWG acknowledges that traceability can support a number of different objectives but has agreed that biosecurity should be the focus informing the design and implementation of a NHTS. This was reflected in the 2019 Senate committee report entitled '[The feasibility of a National Horse Traceability Register for all horses](#)'.

In January 2022, an [independent report by Marsden Jacob Associates](#) was released which focused on the potential role of a horse traceability system in the context of biosecurity.

Current traceability requirements for the Australian horse community

In most jurisdictions, property owners and horse carers are required to have a Property Identification Code (PIC) for the properties on which horses reside. The information regarding each PIC held and maintained by the jurisdictions typically includes:

- Species present
- Name of property owner/manager and their contact details
- Name of livestock manager/carers and their contact details, and
- Geospatial information about the parcel/s of land associated with the PIC.

The PIC system is a tool that can enable the movement of horses between locations to be recorded, facilitating prompt traceback and contact tracing should the need arise. PICs enable the location of nearby properties, where susceptible species may also reside, to be quickly identified during a disease outbreak.

Current traceability requirements rely on the PIC system for the horse industry, however some areas of the horse industry have more advanced systems, such as Racing Australia and Harness Racing Australia, to support integrity and performance recording.

Proposed traceability requirements for the Australian horse community

To achieve better preparedness for biosecurity incident responses, the NHTWG supports incrementally improving components of the existing horse traceability framework by:

- Refreshing and maturing the PIC system managed by states and territories.
- Introducing uniform national PIC Business Rules.
- Enabling enforcement of PIC legislation.
- Requiring base level movement information to be recorded by all sectors of the horse industry.

Base level starting point

The Australian horse community is largely unregulated in relation to traceability and any changes to traceability requirements will be new, outside the thoroughbred and standardbred industries. With this in mind, and using the findings of [the Marsden Jacob Associates report](#), the NHTWG agreed that the establishment of a base level traceability system as a starting point will achieve adequate traceability to address biosecurity challenges, would best suit the needs of stakeholders and provides a platform to move in time to incorporate greater complexity. This type of system would deliver functional traceability for biosecurity purposes ahead of considering the need for a more complex NHTS at a future date.

An effective animal traceability system incorporates identification information such as brands, markings and microchips that can link an animal to a responsible person and a location. These components, when linked together, allow authorities to track an animal or group of animals to their properties of residence and to quickly locate associated animals to assist with management of biosecurity challenges.

A base level system does not include mandatory microchipping. The NHTWG proposes to maintain current requirements – it is mandatory where required by specific racing or equestrian authorities and voluntary for any other sector of the industry.

Key elements of a traceability system

The NHTWG proposes the NHTS include the following elements to achieve biosecurity objectives:

- a. Adoption of the PIC system administered by the states

and territories. PIC registers contain information on the location of properties, the species present and contact details for the person who is responsible for livestock, including horses, on a property.

- b. Where required by racing or equestrian authorities, or used on a voluntary basis by owners, the use of implanted microchips (transponders) in a standardised manner to permanently identify animals.
- c. Movement recording obligations for horse movements from a biosecurity perspective.
- d. Utilisation of existing industry managed and secure databases that register horses along with their owners, descriptions, brands and markings and, where applicable, their transponder (microchip) numbers.
- e. Endorsement of agreed Business Rules, supported by enabling state and territory legislation.
- f. An ongoing education program for horse industry participants to understand their responsibilities.
- g. Documented arrangements for compliance monitoring, enforcement, evaluation, and periodic review.
- h. The development and use of tools that will allow authorities to quickly access relevant data on registers and databases to determine the history and whereabouts of individual horses, or groups of horses and their companions, specifically for biosecurity purposes.

Proposed Business Rules

The NHTWG has drafted Business Rules that outline the obligations of industry participants relating to property registration, microchip application (where mandated by a sector of the industry), movement records and associated data management.

Who will the proposed Business Rules apply to?

The proposed Business Rules will apply to all horses, donkeys and mules (referred to collectively as horses) and will address the responsibilities of the following industry participants:

- Horse owners and carers
- Transporters
- Selling agents (including saleyard operators, public auctions and online selling platforms)
- Processors (including abattoirs and knackereries)
- Racing authorities and agricultural show and equestrian event organisers
- Studs

Key components of the proposed Business Rules

Movement Record Requirements

When will a movement record be required?

A movement record is required when a horse is moving to another property (a location with a different PIC) on which it will then reside.

Movement records are not required where a horse is being temporarily moved to be exercised, attend an equestrian event or show where a record of its attendance is kept by the event organisers, or to receive veterinary treatment, provided the horse will return directly to its property of residence.

Who will have an obligation to create and keep movement records?

Owners and carers	Owners and carers will be responsible for creating and keeping records when they move or authorise the relocation of a horse or horses to another PIC.
Transporters	Businesses involved in the transportation of horses between properties including to a saleyard, depot, abattoir, knackery, veterinary clinic, stud farm, agricultural show or equestrian event for any reason or purpose.
Selling agents	Persons who operate a saleyard or hold a public auction including auctions held on a farm, at sale venues or at an agricultural show or exhibition. This includes designated horse online selling platforms that are contracted to sell horses.
Processors	Persons owning, operating or managing an establishment where horses are processed, including a licensed abattoir or knackery.
Race meetings, agricultural shows and equestrian events	Persons and organisations organising or managing an event at which horses will assemble including but not limited to agricultural shows, race meetings and equestrian events, such as pony club gatherings, polo tournaments, rodeos and campdrafts. This also includes organised non-competition gathering of horses, such as trail riding or fun ride clubs.
Studs	Studs will be responsible for creating and keeping records when they receive horses and when horses leave.

What information/data will a person involved in a horse movement need to keep?

The core details that will need to be recorded and kept are:

- Details regarding the horse/s that were moved
- PIC or address of the property from which the horse/s were dispatched
- PIC or address of the property to which the horse/s were taken
- Date of the movement
- Name and contact details of the person creating the record

What is the suggested timeframe in which a movement record must be created?

A movement record must be created within 24 hours of a movement or within 24 hours of a horse being processed at an abattoir or knackery.

Record Keeping Requirements

What is the suggested timeframe a record must be kept for?

A minimum of 6 months.

What is the suggested timeframe that the record must be retrievable by the person who generated it?

Upon request by an authorised officer specifically for biosecurity or compliance monitoring purposes.

How can records be stored?

Movement records can be stored by industry participants in a retrievable electronic format, such as a computer program, database or spreadsheet, or on paper if the electronic storage of records is not feasible. The Business Rules are not prescriptive on the method by which records are created and kept – only that they must be retrievable if requested by an authorised state/territory biosecurity officer.

Traceability outcome

In response to a biosecurity incident, the expected outcome associated with the implementation and operation of the proposed Business Rules is to enable:

- Horses of interest to be traceable within 24 hours to properties (PICs) on which they have resided or visited (traceback).
- Horses co-residing with or have been in contact with horses of interest to be located within 24 hours (contact tracing).
- Details of horse movements over the past six months to be available for review.

Submit your feedback

All sectors of the horse industry are invited to provide feedback on what the proposed Business Rules, if implemented, will mean for them. Submit your feedback through this consultation survey - bit.ly/NHTSconsultation - before close of business on **Wednesday 25 May 2022**.

Submissions can be either as an individual or on behalf of an organisation or business. Key questions outlined in the survey cover:

- What actions you or your organisation/business anticipate will be necessary to implement the proposed traceability system arrangements and what timeframe may be required to complete them?
- What challenges are likely to arise if the proposed Business Rules are adopted?
- How do you believe the benefits of a National Horse Traceability System can be maximised for you or your organisation/business?
- What awareness or education activities might be required for your sector of the industry to prepare for a horse traceability system?
- How to cost and fund the traceability system outlined in the proposed Business Rules? Would industry participants be willing to pay for a more advanced traceability system incorporating a national horse database and associated monitoring and enforcement?

What happens next

The NHTWG will consider feedback on the proposed Business Rules. Once finalised, the Business Rules will be one component of a suite of recommendations provided by the NHTWG to Agriculture Ministers in mid-2022 for their consideration.

More information

Queries can be directed to Horse Traceability (Victorian Department of Jobs Precincts and Regions) at horse.traceability@agriculture.vic.gov.au