



National Horse Traceability Working Group

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the National Horse Traceability Working Group (Working Group)?

The National Horse Traceability Working Group (Working Group) is a non-statutory committee set up by the then Agriculture Ministers' Forum in 2020 to provide advice on the design and introduction of a traceability system for horses, donkeys and mules in Australia. The Working Group was established following the release in mid-2021 of the Senate's Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee's report entitled '*The feasibility of a National Horse Traceability Register for all horses*', which recommended that at its core, a National Horse Traceability System (NHTS) should serve a biosecurity function.

The Working Group is considering further ways in which a NHTS could be used to deliver broader benefits to horse industry stakeholders. This is in line with the Senate Committee's report which as part of Recommendation 6 proposed that the NHTS be designed to enable additional features to be incorporated as it progresses, and to allow for the horse industry to take responsibility for and progress any future functionality amendments. Such functionality amendments could assist with improving animal welfare, emergency response management and the integrity of trade in horses.

What is the membership of the Working Group?

The Working Group includes representatives from Animal Health Australia, Australian Horse Industry Council, Racing Australia, Harness Racing Australia, Equestrian Australia, the RSPCA and the State, Territory and Commonwealth governments.

Agriculture Victoria is represented by one of the thirteen government and non-government members of the Working Group and is providing administrative support.

What is horse traceability?

Horse traceability in the context of the proposed NHTS refers to the ability to trace (find) the location of horses and to determine their past movements from place to place.

What is the National Horse Traceability System?

The proposed NHTS will be a tool that will be used to enhance horse traceability by government departments/agencies, to meet biosecurity challenges such as preparedness and response to disease outbreaks and natural disasters.



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What is the difference between horse traceability and horse welfare?

In the context of a disease or natural disaster, horse traceability is used for finding:

- where a horse or group of horses have been within the applicable time period for that disease or incident, and
- the current locations of animals, both horses and other susceptible species, that were with or near an affected animal or location.

Good welfare means providing horses with all the necessary elements to ensure their physical and mental wellbeing. Complying with agreed welfare standards and codes, and with state and territory animal welfare legislation for the management and care of horses means that horse owners are meeting the minimum standards required for care of their horses.

For thoroughbred racing and breeding industry participants, other horse welfare and traceability related obligations are contained within the Australian Rules of Racing, the Local Rules of Racing and the Rules of the Australian Stud Book. The standardbred breeding and racing industry is regulated by the Rules of Harness Racing.

How do horse traceability and welfare intersect?

Horse welfare and traceability intersect in a number of ways including when the following occur:

- extreme weather events (fire/flood/drought),
- disease outbreaks, and
- when essential needs are not being met such as food, water, shelter.

In the event of any one of these emergencies it is essential to be able to contact the owner/carer quickly to make arrangements to ensure the horses safety.

Is rider safety being considered as a part of the proposed traceability system?

At this point in time, the proposed NHTS will not include a function to ensure the safety of riders, this remains the responsibility of the individual. Remembering that each horse is unique with differing temperaments, athletic ability and that a horse responds in the moment, in relation to that horse's experiences.

Knowing that a horse's movement history is available, individuals will be able to share this information with each other on a case by case basis, but this will not form part of the legislative framework.



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What other work is being undertaken by government to continually improve horse welfare?

Work is underway at a national level, led by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, on the development of new '*Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Livestock at Processing Establishments*'. Queensland is also leading a review of the suitability of the existing *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for the Land Transport of Livestock* in relation to horses.

Why is traceability for horses important in Australia?

The ability to rapidly trace horses will enable authorities and industry to effectively manage the response to and recovery from a disease outbreak or natural disaster.

What biosecurity threats exist for horses?

Horses are susceptible to many infectious diseases including Equine Influenza, Hendra Virus, African Horse Sickness, Japanese Encephalitis Virus and Vesicular Stomatitis.

Outbreaks of serious diseases could potentially have significant horse health and welfare, economic, and in some cases human health implications.

Who is responsible for biosecurity in Australia?

States and territories, with support from industry and the Commonwealth, are responsible for managing biosecurity within their borders, including disease surveillance and emergency response. The Commonwealth is responsible for matters relating to the national border, including border security, quarantine and regulation of imports. Pests and disease status can also be a relevant element of the Commonwealth's agricultural export certification requirements.

The maintenance of biosecurity standards relating to horses in Australia is the joint responsibility of horse owners and carers, various horse industry sectors, the states/territories and the Commonwealth. Supporting organisations, in particular Animal Health Australia, also play a role.

Animal Health Australia is the custodian of the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA) that outlines stakeholder responsibilities, joint decision making and the cost share arrangements for a national emergency animal disease response. The Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan (AUSVETPLAN) sets out nationally agreed plans on how to respond to emergency animal disease outbreaks.



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What is a PIC?

A Property Identification Code (PIC) is a unique eight character identifying code allocated by the agency responsible for animal health in each state or territory. The requirement for properties on which horses reside to have a PIC was introduced in most states and territories soon after the 2007 Equine Influenza outbreak. A PIC identifies a parcel or parcels of land on which livestock are or may be held.

Information regarding each PIC is held in registries maintained by the states or territories.

This will generally include:

- Name and/or address of the property
- Name of the property owner and their contact details
- Name of the livestock manager/carer and their contact details,
- Geospatial information about the parcel/s of land associated with the PIC, and
- Species present (including domesticated horses)

Who is currently required to register for a PIC?

Owners and managers of horses must ensure that the properties on which their horses are kept have a PIC. Businesses responsible for land where horses will visit or attend such as showgrounds, racecourses, veterinary clinics must ensure they have a PIC. In most states, properties on which cattle, buffalo, bison, sheep, goats, pigs, alpacas, llamas, horses, domesticated camels or deer must have a PIC. This includes farms, residential properties at which livestock live, racetracks, transit depots, studs, veterinary practices, knackeries, abattoirs, public auction houses including saleyards, rodeo, camp drafting and agricultural show venues.

The PIC system is the cornerstone of Australia's National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) for cattle, sheep, goats and pigs, and will play a central role in the proposed NHTS.

How do I obtain a PIC?

PICs are assigned by state and territory government agencies to parcels of land on which livestock are or may be held.

To obtain a PIC, you should contact the relevant agency responsible for animal health in your state or territory.



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Refer to Table 1 on page 9 for relevant state/territory contact details and website links.

How much does a PIC cost?

The costs associated with applying for and maintaining a PIC vary from state to state. Contact the relevant animal health agency in your state or territory.

Refer to Table 1 on page 9 for relevant State/Territory contact details and website links.

What do horse owners/carers need to do to keep their PIC information current?

A property owner, stud/farm/agistment manager is responsible for ensuring that the relevant government agency in their state/territory is notified of changes to details relating to a PIC. This may include:

- a) owner contact details including name, address and contact phone number,
- b) manager contact details including name, address and contact phone number,
- c) changes to property boundaries including expansion through acquisition or agreement to graze livestock, or reduction through sale or the relinquishing of a lease or agistment right, and
- d) the livestock species that are or will be kept on the property.

Owners and carers should check with their relevant animal health agency regarding their obligations to report changes to information kept in a PIC register.

Refer to Table 1 on page 9 for relevant State/Territory contact details and website links.

Who should I contact to update my PIC details?

Contact the relevant animal health agency in your state or territory.

Refer to Table 1 on page 9 for relevant State/Territory contact details and website links.

How are horses traced today?

Currently, there is no formal NHTS in Australia. States and territories rely on their PIC system to identify where horses reside or have been located.

Some sectors of the horse industry already have more advanced identification and traceability systems to support integrity and performance recording imperatives, such as the thoroughbred and harness racing industries.



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There are currently no nationally consistent requirements relating to the keeping of records when horses move. Movement recording used in conjunction with the PIC system will greatly enhance the ability of government authorities to trace horses during disease outbreaks and in times of natural disaster.

How is PIC information currently used by state and territory governments?

During an outbreak of an infectious horse disease or natural disaster, government agencies will use their PIC registers to identify affected properties with horses and other susceptible species. Persons responsible for the care of livestock on these properties will be quickly contacted and their animals examined and tested, moved or returned home, as appropriate.

Why is it important that PIC details are kept up-to-date?

An accurate and up-to-date PIC system enables the location of properties on which horses or other susceptible species are kept to be quickly identified during a disease outbreak or natural disaster, which helps to protect horse health and welfare.

If PIC details are not kept up-to-date, state and territory governments may not be able to identify affected properties and contact horse owners or carers to quickly locate horses when necessary.

What is the role of the PIC in a horse traceability system?

A PIC identifies a parcel of land on which a horse/s (or other species) are kept and provides contact details for the owner/carer.

The PIC system enables the recording of movements of livestock between properties.

Are there any current horse movement requirements in my state/territory?

In some states, for example Queensland and NSW, people moving horses may need to carry a waybill or Travelling Stock Statement.

Check the website of the relevant government authority in the state/territory in which horses are to be moved to determine movement documentation requirements.

Refer to Table 1 on page 9 for relevant State/Territory contact details and website links.



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Do other countries have horse traceability systems?

Horse traceability systems operate in the UK, European Union and Canada. They each have differing objectives and obligations on horse owners and carers.

What will a horse traceability system mean for me?

The proposed NHTS will require that people keeping horses must have a PIC for the properties on which their horses reside. This is currently the case in most states and territories.

They will also be required to create and retain records when horses move to a different PIC.

These measures will enable horses to be traced more quickly during disease outbreaks, minimising the economic impact and protecting their health and welfare.

What new requirements will be proposed that do not currently apply?

- Introducing uniform national PIC related business rules for properties and other locations where horses reside.
- Improving traceability through mandatory recording of PICs by competitors at horse events.
- Requiring horse movement information to be recorded and retained by all sectors of the horse industry/community.

What is the cost of national horse traceability system?

A consultant has been engaged to quantify the costs of establishing a base level NHTS using state and territory PIC registers and industry-maintained movement records, as well as a more advanced microchip-based system supported by a national horse ownership and movement database. This will inform the Working Group's recommendations to Agriculture ministers.

Components of the NHTS may require additional funding including communications, and monitoring and enforcement of regulatory requirements.

An on-going communications effort will be needed to ensure that people who own properties on which horses are kept and who care for horses understand their obligations relating to obtaining and maintaining a PIC.



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On-going effort will also be needed to ensure adequate communication and extension is provided, as well as monitoring the compliance of industry participants with movement recording obligations.

How will my horse be identified in a horse traceability system?

Horses are typically managed on an individual or small group basis. The identity of horses that are moving between properties could be recorded for traceability purposes using identification descriptions such as breed, gender, colour, markings, brands, and where possible or required, microchip details.

How will the users of the horse traceability system handle my information?

In the event of an emergency, to support disease surveillance or for monitoring and enforcement purposes, only state and territory governments will have access to PIC information held on their PIC registers. They may also require copies of movement records.

Industry held movement information provided by industry participants as part of a proposed NHTS will be governed by state and territory privacy provisions and can only be utilised by authorised officers.

When will the horse traceability system be live?

The Working Group's role is to make recommendations on the design and introduction of a NHTS. The Working Group will provide recommendations to Agriculture Ministers in the coming months. These recommendations will be considered and decided upon by Agriculture Ministers, followed by implementation on the agreed date.

Refer to Table 1 below for State/Territory contact details and website links



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Table 1 - State/Territory contact details and website links

State/Territory	Contact phone number	Website to apply for a Property Identification Code
Australian Capital Territory Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate – Environment	Phone: (02) 6205 3737	https://www.environment.act.gov.au/parks-conservation/plants-and-animals/Biosecurity/animal-health/livestock-management#PIC
New South Wales Department of Primary Industries	Local Land Services Helpline: 1300 795 299	https://www.lis.nsw.gov.au/i-want-to/apply-for-a-property-identification-code For movement documentation requirements please visit: https://www.lis.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/1260007/Transporting-horses-in-NSW-FAQs-Sept-2020.pdf
Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry and Resources	Phone: (08) 8973 9703	https://nt.gov.au/industry/agriculture/livestock/get-a-property-identification-code
Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries	Biosecurity Queensland - Business Information Centre: 13 25 23	https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/agriculture/land-management/pic
South Australia Primary Industries & Regions of South Australia (PIRSA)	Biosecurity SA Phone: 1800 654 688	https://www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/animal_health/property_identification_code_pic
Tasmania Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania	Biosecurity Tasmania Phone: 1300 368 550	https://nre.tas.gov.au/agriculture/animal-industries/identifying-selling-moving-livestock/about-livestock-identification/property-identification-code-pic-registration
Victoria Agriculture Victoria	Biosecurity Division Phone: 1800 678 779	https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/property-identification-codes
Western Australia Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development	Phone: 1300 926 547	https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/livestock-biosecurity/stock-brand-and-pic-register-search-guide For movement documentation requirements please visit: https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/livestock-movement-identification/moving-livestock-western-australia For horse identification requirements visit: https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/livestock-movement-identification/horse-and-donkey-identification-western-australia