

Japanese encephalitis – protecting your horses from mosquito bites

Japanese encephalitis virus is spread primarily by mosquitoes. Integrated mosquito management is critical to reducing the risk to both people and animals. This includes controlling mosquitoes in various ways, such as reducing opportunities for breeding and attacking both the larval and adult life stages.

Stabling horses between dusk and dawn can help, as the mosquito most likely to carry diseases of concern is a night time feeder that stays outdoors.

Stabling horses

If stabling horses, consider using the following measures:

- installing appropriate physical barriers at entry and exit points, e.g., a double door entry-exit system
- turning off lights inside stables during the night
- using fluorescent lights that do not attract mosquitoes
- placing incandescent bulbs outside the stable perimeter to draw mosquitoes away from horses
- screening building openings e.g., cover windows with shade cloth mesh that has been treated with an insecticide registered for the control of mosquitoes such as cypermethrin. Reapply product weekly by applying the chemical to screens as per the instructions contained on the chemical label
- fogging, fans and automatic overhead misting systems to eliminate mosquitoes within stables
- spraying of stable walls with insecticides registered for use as a structural treatment around agricultural buildings. In order to prevent possible adverse reactions do not apply to areas where horses may come into direct contact with the sprayed area.

Other techniques

Other techniques to prevent mosquito bites include:

- topical treatment of horses using chemicals registered for direct application to horses as mosquito repellents
- physical barriers - rugging and hooding horses in lightweight permethrin treated material (if climatically appropriate). Horse owners can treat their own horse rugs using agricultural chemicals registered for such use

- where possible reducing mosquito breeding sites on the premises such as dripping or leaking taps and water troughs, as well as discarding old tyres which are a common breeding ground
- where it is not possible to fully eliminate all potential breeding sites, treat the breeding sites with an appropriately registered larvicide
- treating the inside of horse floats and trucks with an aerosol insecticide registered for the control of mosquitoes.

Chemicals

When using chemicals for control of larvae or adult mosquitoes, or for direct application to horses, the chemicals:

- should be used in accordance with the product label
- must only be used by people authorised to use chemicals
- should only be applied to areas requiring treatment e.g., mosquito harbouring or breeding sites

Chemical users must also keep records of their chemical use in accordance with relevant Victorian law.

Some repellents that are registered for use on horses do not allow treatment on animals destined for human consumption. These products must not be used if there is any chance of the horse entering the food chain.

The virus can also be spread through management practices such as reuse of needles. To minimise the risk avoid reusing needles between animals and thoroughly wash and decontaminate other equipment between animals.

Further resources

Farm Biosecurity website at [Mosquito management for horses](#)

For more information on mosquito borne diseases and livestock in Victoria, visit agriculture.vic.gov.au/je

For more information about how to [Protect yourself from mosquito-borne disease](#).

Accessibility

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