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Farmers support DPI eradication of Equine Influenza

The NSW Farmers' Association has today voted overwhelmingly to support the NSW Department of Primary Industry's (DPI's) efforts to eradicate Equine Influenza (EI), at its Executive Council meeting in Sydney.

NSW Farmers' Association Exotic Disease, Quarantine, Plant and Animal Health Committee Chairman Peter Carter says farmers are backing strategies to eradicate the disease before it is allowed to become endemic.

"Any suggestion that the disease should be left to run its course, rather than follow steps for eradication are ludicrous and would tarnish Australia clean image in the area of disease control," Mr Carter said.

Mr Carter says given its two to five day incubation period, 8 day infection period and 36 hours life in the environment, this disease should be relatively easy to eradicate, as opposed to other diseases that have much different vital statistics.

"If we can't get rid of EI, what hope does our industry have if there was an outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD).

"We need a concerted effort from all involved, including governments, the horse industry, the agricultural sector and the public to ensure we get this right.

"There is evidence to suggest that EI was allowed to run its course in the early 19th century and it took over 60 years to disappear. We can't afford to have a similar situation here," Mr Carter said.

The Association will be bringing this policy to the attention of the NSW Government.

"Equine Influenza would have a damaging impact on the horse industry if it became established in the population, as it would burden the industry with ongoing management costs.

"Eradication is crucial to ensure horses are protected against this disease and farmers look forward to seeing the results of the inquiry," Mr Carter concluded.

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Fast fact: The current drought has had a major impact on the Australian economy, with an estimated 46% decline in real farm income and a \$4 billion drop in GDP