

Too many horses for sale

WILL the Magic Millions Sale starting on the Gold Coast tonight be yet another victim of equine influenza?

MM general manager David Chester has concerns and admits there are too many horses in this year's catalogue.

"We decided to have a big catalogue before EI hit. In hindsight we may have been better with fewer yearlings," Chester said yesterday.

The MM Sale, usually conducted in January, was delayed because of EI, thus losing the advantage of being the first yearling sale of the year.

It has been sandwiched between the Melbourne and Sydney sales and already more than \$100 million has been spent on yearlings this year.

"We may struggle a bit at the middle and bottom end of the market as there may not enough buyers to go around," Chester said.

"But this is the best catalogue, best pedigrees and best type of horses we have ever had at this sale.

"There will certainly be value for those at that middle and bottom end of the market."

Chester is hoping his usual supporters step in.

Gai Waterhouse has been among the top buyers in recent years and expects to be so again.

"I make no secret how much I like this sale. We have had plenty of success from it and I've looked at all the lots and there is quality again," Waterhouse said.

Another inspecting horses yesterday was Anthony Cummings, trainer of Saturday's Group 1 Chipping Norton Stakes winner Casino Prince.

Its three-quarter brother by Redoute's Choice is lot 861 and it would be no surprise if Cummings buys it for racing's new big spender Nathan Tinkler.

Tinkler is the Queenslander who last year sold 70 per cent of Custom Mining, a central Queensland coal mining outfit, for \$275 million.

He has since has gone from coals to foals, spending \$7 million at the New Zealand Karaka sale and another \$3.5 million at the Melbourne Premier Sale.

Tinkler, who buys under the name of Patinack Farm, is setting up a three-state attack in Queensland, NSW and Victoria and has Jamie Neilson, Paddy Payne and Cummings as his trainers.

He recently bought into Casino Prince whose value as a stud horse swelled after Saturday's win.

Lot 861 will be sold on Thursday as will another colt, Dance Hero's three-quarter brother (lot 785) which is also expected to challenge as the sale's top-priced yearling.

"Some people may be waiting for the upcoming Sydney Easter sale. But we (MM) have the most athletic types and that is what trainers look at these days," Chester said.

"Next year's MM Two-Year-Old Classic is up in prizemoney to \$2 million which is another boost to this sale.

"Horses who have performed well in those races, particularly the colts, have risen in value enormously."

Chester said the measure of this sale's success will be seen by the clearance rate, gross turnover and to a degree the average price.