

Marion Harriott

Tallebudgera Valley, QLD 4228

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

I am forced to write to put my support behind an enquiry being conducted in the unethical way in which the Hendra Vaccine has been released to the equine world in Queensland and the ongoing conduct of vets towards their customers – human and horse.

With the threat of various competitions mandating the Hendra vaccine many, many horse owners vaccinated their treasured four legged family member thinking they were doing the right thing. Many, many horses suffered a whole range of reactions – some life threatening.

My daughter's horse had to be vaccinated to compete in the 2014 Pony Club NSW State Dressage Championships - they were named on the Queensland team to represent Pony Club Association of Qld. Her horse suffered a nasty reaction that could have had a serious outcome had I not been home to monitor and take appropriate action. With this in mind I did not follow on with subsequent vaccinations at 6monthly intervals. This protocol astounds me as it is clearly obvious that this onslaught of vaccinations on a horse's immune system is bringing some horses undone. The vaccine was never thoroughly tested, and with the vaccine permits at the time, stating not tested with regards to breeding stock or horses with existing conditions this fairly well covers a lot of horses. Our horse did not suffer any long term problems – she thankfully made a full recovery within 2 weeks of receiving only the second vaccination 21 days after the first one.

Horse owners are now finding themselves in difficult situations when their horse either hurts itself in a paddock accident, or has a colic attack and cannot get a vet to attend. (It is obvious that vets think that all horses are Hendra Virus cases and do not want anything to do with them.) Vets are leaving these horses to suffer with little to no pain relief being offered whilst the vet goes through the motions of taking bloods to have a Hendra Exclusion test performed – results of which can take some time to come through. It has been known that this exclusion test has also been performed on vaccinated horses so one must wonder why vaccinate if the vet still will not treat the horse immediately. There has recently been a case of where a dearly loved vaccinated pony was suffering from colic and a number of vets refused to attend. They would not check the microchip details on the relative database. This pony had recently changed ownership but the microchip number was known to all parties. Sadly due to the vet's reluctance, or maybe inability, to check the vaccination history of the pony to confirm what the previous owner advised this pony had to be put to sleep. Why have a database if the vet is not willing to utilise it. At time of writing, I have not heard of any horse coming back with a positive test when an exclusion test has been undertaken but have definitely heard of some horses that have died a horribly painful death waiting for the results or had to be euthanised due to delay in treatment because they were waiting for results. It is my belief that the vets should resort to using PPE appropriate to the consultation. Vets seem to need to be educated on what PPE is all about.

I am now thinking that my two retired (aged) horses will be better off being put to sleep rather than having to vaccinate them and risk a reaction due to their age and health issues they have. Up to this point in time I have been able to manage their health quite well and only needing veterinary attention to them about six times combined in the last 10 years. Why would I subject them to a vaccine that could radically lead to a decline in their health and create ongoing financial, health and emotional stress for myself and family just so a vet could treat them for any of the usual ails that could affect them as they age. I sincerely believe that by vaccinating my horses this will lead them to an early death and this scares me enough to not vaccinate.

Personally I would dearly love to get myself another horse that I can do low level competing and trail riding on but sadly I feel my time as a horse owner is coming to an end. My daughter is still an active competitor but if the Hendra vaccine becomes mandatory she will retire and so that will be the end of her dreams of training her horse up through the grades and then breeding a foal from her mare. The temptation to send both my daughter and her horse to friends in Victoria is very tempting – at least it will get them away from the ████████ – pardon my language!

It is very depressing what is happening to the equine community at the present time. Those of us who do not want to vaccinate or simply their horse/s is not a suitable candidate for the vaccination are being denied even the basic veterinary attention just to treat a lame horse – this clearly is not connected with Hendra virus. With owners stepping down from being involved with horses the flow-on effect to related businesses could be quite devastating for those business owners – feed merchants, farriers, equine dentists, equine chiropractors/physios, saddlery and equipment, horse float manufacturers and dealers, even motor vehicle sales for vehicles to tow horse floats and maintenance of same and to some extent real estate.

There are a large number of people who attend the regular horse sales around the country whose goal is to rescue a neglected horse, nurse it back to peak health and either hangs onto it or on sell to a good home. It is at this point that the horse needs to be inspected by a vet to assess its current health – it is fair to say that vets may no longer get this close to rescue type horses – so all the good work being performed by the various rescue organisations will be a waste of time and energy and resources.

It is my opinion that AVA (Australian Veterinary Association) and vets will cripple the whole equine pleasure horse industry because of their failure to act fairly. They need to have a correct and full understanding of their requirements when treating any horse regardless of vaccination status as per WPHS – it seems that the AVA have their own interpretation that is being touted to equine vets - but they keep on with their scaremongering tactics and claims that those that do not vaccinate are endangering our family etc... The Hendra Virus has been a part of the rural landscape for far longer than the 1994 Vic Rail event and up till then we were all safe and have been since except for those who performed fairly intensive procedures without the use of PPE (PPE does not necessarily have to be the “boiler suit” type either) . The fact that Hendra Virus has been classed as BSL4 is ridiculous. The people who succumbed to the virus did so by their own hand as they basically did not follow PPE protocol when performing necropsy. The number of Hendra virus cases per year is minimal - this

could be put down to better awareness on the part of the horse owners on how to manage their horses and properties in regards to biosecurity and a better educated awareness of the Hendra virus - and I feel there was not the need for a vaccine to be released, especially in the manner in which the current Hendra Vaccine was released with minimal testing along with the requirement for ongoing 6 monthly vaccinations. It is time to call a halt to all the crap horse owners have had to deal with since the release of the vaccine and for vets to do what they signed up for when they became vets. – treat animals and leave no animal to suffer. Then again, maybe by having a horse PTS instead of treating comes under the “leave no animal to suffer”!! Horse owners have lost all faith and trust in their vets and are now willing to treat their own horses by their own means – going back to the good old bushy days. We do not want to be bullied/coerced into using this vaccine and vets should stop being so discriminatory towards horse owners who have made the choice to not vaccinate.