

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Agriculture and Environment Committee](#)
Subject: Submission to the Inquiry into Hendra Virus (HeV) Vaccine and its use.
Date: Sunday, 27 March 2016 1:32:04 PM

Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to provide the following submission for the Inquiry into the Hendra Virus (HeV) Vaccine and its use.

In 2006 I lost my horse to Hendra virus and documented the event and its impact in my book 'Spillover: A Memoir.' The case led to an independent Parliamentary Review and the book was also cited in a Parliamentary Inquiry into later cases.

The aim of the book was to increase awareness of Hendra Virus and I participated in a number of meetings and information sessions with Government authorities to help progress and promote the known information about Hendra Virus. I became aware of the status of the development of the vaccine and supported the call for its release and availability. While I have no doubt about the science behind the vaccine and trust the CSIRO team's work in its development, I nevertheless did hesitate for approximately twelve months before vaccinating my remaining horse. I continue to live on the property where my horse became infected and died and it remains a high risk Hendra Virus area. Even though the large colony of flying foxes that existed at the time of my horse's infection, and for a number of years after, is no longer present, the flying foxes remain, often feeding in the area, albeit in reduced numbers.

I initially hesitated because the release of the vaccine did appear to be hurried, and from following social media, did raise some doubts. However, the deep trauma from the circumstances of the loss of my horse and the possibility of becoming infected myself never left me, indeed I think I will carry it for life. It is a fear you can not describe and can not know unless you experience it. And I believe others who have been directly exposed in a HeV case carry a similar fear. The cost of the vaccine did not concern me as I had seen the consequences of an infection with HeV, although I did, and still do, consider the continued six monthly boosters as 'over vaccinating' given the advice from the CSIRO team. My mare has not had any side effects from the vaccine, but due to her age and circumstances, (she is approximately 39 years old), I requested, in consultation with my veterinarian, to reduce the boosters to once per year within the framework of current practice required to maintain her immunity.

Within a short time frame we have moved from trying to increase awareness of a previously little known deadly virus, to the introduction of a vaccine to discussions about the negative implications of its use. As one of the limited number of people who has experienced the impact of the virus I have been dismayed at the approach of the authorities in dealing with cases, i.e. the legal action taken against veterinarians and the negative consequences such action has promoted such as 'refusal' to treat, increased

liability and reduced trust, and distressed owners. I believe that in these still early stages of knowledge of the virus and the vaccine that continued, increased and non-sensationalised training, awareness and dissemination of accurate information and a promotion of a change in culture in handling sick animals is the way forward.

The peace of mind the vaccination gives me is immeasurable, however in saying that I do understand the point of view of other horse owners who choose not to or cannot afford to vaccinate, who are still awaiting more evidence of safety of the vaccine itself or who feel they are being bullied into vaccinating their horses. I also appreciate the often difficult position veterinarians are placed in when requested to treat sick horses. I do not make recommendations for or against vaccination but rather tell other owners of my decision and advise them, when asked, to discuss their situation and risk assessment with their veterinarian.

kindest regards,

Jennifer Crane BSSc, MLitt

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