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Agriculture and Environment Committee
Hendra Enquiry

Dear Committee,

Please accept my submission to the Enquiry.

We have 3 horses which have been vaccinated regularly with HEV, by the same vet since January 2014 (second injection). All 3 were fine with injections till the 4th 6 monthly booster. Their 3rd booster was given in Jan 2015. We booked the vet to visit for all 3 to have their teeth done and get annual 2-1 Tetanus and Strangles injections...I saw the vet giving the third horse a fourth injection and asked what is that one, and he said HEV. I said they just had one in January and aren't due till July. He said in quick response, I thought we should do all together to save you a call out fee next time. That became immediately a \$330 cost that I hadn't ordered, and may have caused very costly reactions. All 3 were as if they were stunned for several days after. The oldest recovered on day 5. She has been fine since. The 6yo gelding took an extra day, but when I saddled him after 2 weeks, it was like he had never been broken in, and he became dangerously active in the cinching process...he has not been re saddled now 12 months later. He did not react to another 6 monthly booster in October 15, but I didn't want to try either. Our youngest horse, then 2yo, reacted badly...in 24 hours, had a large swelling at the HEV injection site. In another 24 hours, had corrugated swelling lumps on one side of her neck. After 72 hours, both sides of her neck were like corrugated iron. I phoned the vet and he said it was normal for swelling to occur at injection sites, but if I was happy to pay a call out fee, he would come and check the filly out, but she should be fine in a couple more days. One week later, it was like life had been dragged from her, and she became lame in one front hoof, listless, dull coat, difficulty eating and drinking, and would just collapse instead of finding comfortable ground. We called the vet again and he treated her for abscess. 2 weeks later, lame in both front hooves, we called the vet and he immediately put her onto a float and transported her to the vet hospital where she stayed for 3 weeks, treated for severe laminitis. She came back to us in July 15 in very tender condition, still difficulty moving but better that when she went to clinic. Her coat was very dull, she was just not well. Our normally vibrant 2yo was now a very sick 3yo with tragically bad hooves. She has required constant reshoeing since July 15, every 2 to 3 weeks for tightening, and every 4/5 weeks new shoes. You could not imagine the pain it took to have her re boosted in October 15, but the vet made it clear, no booster, no visit...end of story. So we have a severely compromised horse and we are forced to do it again. Once again, within 24 hours, a swelling reaction, and in 48 hours, severe swelling, and we were thinking this is it, we will lose her this time. I rang the vet and the same deal, pay a callout fee and he will come. On November 12, 14 days after booster, the filly collapsed in the paddock, she had been unable to put her head down to eat or drink, and was feeling very sick...we called the vet again, but he couldn't come for several hours because he was attending calving on a property out of town. 3 hours later, the filly got up, so we cancelled the vet call. Early December, we decided to try a multi vitamin and biotin supplement, and after 2 weeks of feeding it, we noticed a difference in her overall condition, behavior and hoof wall condition improved rapidly. It is now early April and we have just received the reminder notice from the

vet to say their boosters are due again at the end of the month.

On the two occasions she has had a reaction so far, I have filed a reaction notice to APVMA, both by phone. The first report in May 15, took 7 months to get a confirmation, but it only accepted injection site swelling. That is not the only reaction I reported, but that is all they have accepted. The second reaction confirmation took a month, after I had followed up several times, only to find the second reaction confirmation was sent first, and the first confirmation was sent last...why was I not comprehending a simple thing like referring to an application date on the confirmation would be a simple thing for APVMA to do...no, they refer to a reaction report number....just another stress causing process to this whole HEV thing. We are now several thousand dollars lighter in the pocket, and now forced to do it all again in 3 weeks time. No vac, no vet. I had a conversation with the vet and Dr Le Strange of Zoetis, and he and our vet had a conversation, and they both confirmed their decision to me that no booster, no vet, that the reactions could not have been caused by the HEV injection. I felt their professional training, their rehearsed responses to my questions, very intimidating and over powering to the stage that they have a very uncomfortable grip on my wallet and the health of my horses. Now just as they get their 6 monthly booster in late April to mid May, APVMA will very soon after announce that the booster requirement is extended to 12 monthly, and I'm another \$330 out of pocket, provided by some miracle my horses don't have a reaction this time. It is my opinion that the problems my horses have had has happened because the vet reduced the booster time from 6 months to 3 months just once, and that was the trigger for their health and my finances, but they still have the last say whether my horses get treated or not.

Yours Faithfully,

Dennis Richardson