

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Agriculture and Environment Committee](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Hendra Enquiry Submission
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My name is Kevin Squire. I am an equine veterinarian. I was born in Brisbane and received my veterinary degree from the University of Queensland. I have two masters degrees in virology and immunology and a PhD in viral molecular genetics from the University of California. I have spent 30 years in private practice, predominantly equine, and 10 years in University & CSIRO research. I currently own a single veterinarian equine practice, the Byron Bay Equine Veterinary Practice. Approximately half my clients are in Queensland in the Gold Coast region from Nerang & Bundall south to the NSW border.

I am extremely proud of my profession in its response to the threat of Hendra virus infection since it was first discovered in 1994, 21 years ago. Until very recently (2015), the profession has continued to unreservedly offer high level professional health care to sick horses, while learning to adapt practice procedures to protect horse owners and veterinary staff from potential lethal exposure to HeV.

Two people died in the first two outbreaks of Hendra virus in Mackay and Hendra in 1994, 1995 when no one knew anything about this new disease. As the profession was coming to grips with this, two more people, both equine veterinarians, were fatally infected with HeV in 2008 & 2009. There have been no further human infections from multiple hendra outbreaks since then. This would reflect an increasingly successful professional approach to potential Hendra cases and protecting horse owners and veterinarians from contact.

All this changed in Queensland in 2015 when OH&S decided to prosecute 3 equine veterinarians for doing their job, ie attending sick horses. The prosecutions were made despite the facts that a) it was the owners decision not to vaccinate, not the attending veterinarians and b) no human infection resulted from the infected horse. Equine veterinarians are the ones who get called out at midnight, on rainy sunday afternoons and at any time during a busy day to horses needing immediate veterinary care. And we do it. But now that OH&S has turned into a police force, veterinarians are now more scared of prosecution for treating potential Hendra cases, than they are of the disease itself.

Since the OH&S prosecutions, I personally know of 1) many owners of sick horses who have been refused veterinary service because their horse was not vaccinated, 2) at least 2 horses that died of treatable conditions (colic) because veterinarians would not treat the horse until a negative HeV test was obtained. (24 to 72 hours or longer). The horses returned a negative test but were dead by then. 3) Owners who were charged \$500 to gown up, collect and submit HeV samples for a case of mild discomfort in an unvaccinated horse. HeV tests were negative 4) Owners who were charged for a Hendra Vaccine on a horse that was lame but not vaccinated and the veterinarian would not attend to the lameness without first vaccinating the horse. And 5) many horse owners are turning to non veterinarians (chiropractors, farriers, equine dentists and equine health carers) for horse treatments denied by some practices on unvaccinated horses.

Now, none of the above was happening before the OH&S prosecutions.

It is my very firm opinion that 1) Veterinarians should be encouraged to enact best practice procedures in attending high risk horses but should be given indemnity from government prosecution. 2) It is the horse owners responsibility to vaccinate. It is the veterinarians responsibility to attend sick horses. If the government wants to prosecute cases of HeV

infection, then let the government question the decision by the horse owner not to vaccinate and leave the health care professionals to manage the very trying situation as best as possible. 3). Until the giant horse racing industry mandates Hendra vaccination, then any ostracism or enforced Hendra vaccination in other (non thoroughbred) unvaccinated horses is total hypocrisy.

My practice actively encourages Hendra vaccination. But I do attend unvaccinated horses.

I would be happy to provide in person testimony to any enquiry.

Kevin Squire, BVSc. PhD.

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