

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Agriculture and Environment Committee](#)
Subject: Hendra virus vaccine
Date: Saturday, 19 March 2016 11:53:54 AM

To whom it may concern,

RE: Opinion on Hendra Virus Vaccination

I believe we should be extremely grateful to have a commercially available vaccine that will protect horses from Hendra virus infection.

Not so long ago, we knew very little of the causes of this disease and how to prevent it. We did not know whether other animals could be infected or what the risks were for people to become infected from horses, or indeed from other animals or even people? With the advancement of scientific principles and further "cutting edge" investigation by scientists in both the veterinary and medical fields, both nationally and internationally, we now understand the epidemiology and aetiology of the Hendra virus. More extraordinarily, we have been given the gift of a vaccine that will prevent horses getting this horrific disease. Indeed the progress to develop a safe commercial vaccine within such a short time frame has been nothing short of spectacular.

The onus is now for horse owners to pay for a vaccine to protect their horses and for veterinarians to have the responsibility of monitoring the vaccination status of each horse. I do believe that the financial and administrative onus for horse owners would be greatly reduced if owners were given Government assurance that annual vaccination at every 12 months, rather than every 6 months, provides adequate protection, as indeed the study trials have indicated.

Finally, due to the uncertainty of establishing an early diagnosis of Hendra virus due to its similarity to colic, acute respiratory disease and neurological disease, veterinarians need the guarantee that horses are Hendra virus free (i.e. currently vaccinated) before they treat an animal that has the potential to infect them with a fatal disease. Is this not an unacceptable risk that could be prevented with vaccination? Even given the recommendations for protective gear and protocols, this risk can be prevented with vaccination. This status is also in the interest of the horse owner and other people and pets in contact with potentially infected animals.

An a final note, many veterinarians are frustrated in the delayed response from Qld Biosecurity to provide support in suspect Hendra Virus infected horses. They tell me that their telephone calls are unanswered or have late followup responses; that they get little or no support on the weekends; and that the testing of suspect horse samples are held over the weekend such that a diagnosis of Hendra Virus is delayed until the following Monday. Clearly this is an untenable situation.

I believe we have a lot to be grateful for given the advances in this disease, but it is now time for the different stakeholders to come together and work towards creating a sustainable healthy policy to safeguard horses, horse owners and veterinarian and auxiliary staff.

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