

15 April 2016

The Agriculture and Environment Committee Hendra Vaccine Inquiry
C/- Mr Rob Hansen
Parliament House
Brisbane
Queensland 4000
Phone: 07 3553 6660

By email: robert.hansen@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Hansen,

RE: Veterinarian Submission to Hendra virus Vaccine Inquiry

My name is Dr Kylie Ewart, and I am an equine veterinarian located at Wauchope, New South Wales. I have been in veterinary practice for 17 years. I wish to address the following Terms of Reference in the Qld Parliament's Hendra virus Vaccine Inquiry:

- The incidence and impact of adverse reactions by horses following vaccination and the reporting of adverse reactions and economic impacts of the Hendra vaccine.
- The development, trials and approval processes of the vaccine
- Who bears the risks of HeV infection and who incurs the costs and receives the benefits from each risk mitigation option.

Since the release of the Hendra vaccine, I have been vaccinating approximately 500 horses. A fair proportion of these horses have been receiving ongoing vaccinations since that time. I have only experienced a minimal number of adverse reactions, limited to injection site reactions which resolved in all cases and in response to phenylbutazone administration. The one horse that I would describe as having had a dramatic reaction developed significant hyperaesthesia (pain sensation) throughout the whole of her body, with a stiff neck (injection site). She also had a fever. Phenylbutazone was administered and symptoms resolved predominantly within 24 hours, and completely within 48 hours. Despite many of my clients now having horses that have received multiple vaccinations, I am actually seeing less in the way of side effects, because any horse which has had any type of a reaction receives phenylbutazone at the time of vaccine administration, and no horse that I have had this approach to has had a reaction. This includes the mare with the previously described significant reaction, and indeed, we vaccinated her confidently during her recent pregnancy with no dramas, and a healthy foal was delivered at its due time. I have had one client make a claim about a severe reaction, however, even though I reported and investigated this reaction as required, it was approx 9 months after the injection that these claims were being made, and it was subsequently determined that this horse had contracted a bacterial pneumonia. So basically, I have not had any unmanageable side effects to the vaccination.

As a vet that frequently attends equestrian events in the area both as a competitor myself, and as a vet, I am terrified at the possibility of being presented with a sick, unvaccinated horse, whose symptoms could be consistent with Hendra virus infection (just about anything!) The course of action that could possibly be required is terrifying to me, and I hope that I am never put in this

position. I already have the local dpi vet number saved into my phone so that I may “pass the buck” as soon as possible. Think back to the Moonbi event in NSW when equine influenza was an issue. This was a disaster for all involved and it terrifies me. I have considered not offering my services at such events, but I am placed in an awful predicament when I am attending such events with my own horses. Very hard to tell people that I don’t want to help them.

I received during the week, an email from my professional indemnity insurance company (Guild) which has also scared me. The email was meant to be a sprooking type email from the company; “how good are we? We will cover you for issues relating to all infectious agents including Hendra, as long as I adhere to all guidelines relating to this”. Here is the problem. I won’t be charged etc if I MANAGE to adhere to these guidelines, but should I slip up, my interpretation of this email, is that I won’t be insured. Absolutely terrifying. I can totally understand why many equine vets are not wanting to attend unvaccinated sick horses at all, and indeed I am questioning myself as to whether or not I should be doing so myself. I also know of local vets who have quite working with horses over fears relating to the Hendra virus and vaccine issues. We noticing a shortage of equine vets in the area, and I certainly am feeling the pressure!!!!

Yours sincerely,

Dr Kylie Ewart BSc (Vet Biol) BVMS

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