

Beaudesert Cutting & Western Performance Club



Beaudesert Qld. 4285

Research Director
Agriculture & Environment Committee
Parliament House
George St
Brisbane Qld 4000

To who it may concern

Inquiry into Hendra virus (HeV) EquiVacc Vaccine & it's use by Veterinarian Surgeons

Members of our Club and its associates welcome the decision to conduct an inquiry into the use of Equi Vacc Vaccine, and the subsequent decision to introduce a policy to not treat unvaccinated horses.

It is generally felt amongst our members and those in the surrounding Communities that Legislative changes enforcing the non-treatment of unvaccinated horses will have lasting impacts both financially and morally throughout the Industry. At present misinformation and indecision is creating division in much of the Horse Industry.

While our Club does not wish to be seen as Anti Hendra Vaccine, we feel that horse owners need to be confident that they are doing the right thing for their stock and the safety of the public by vaccinating their horses. We understand that due to public safety concerns the vaccine needed to be made available within the shortest possible timeframe. Most people who are horse owners have growing concerns that full reports on outcomes of these trials during the development of the drug have not been made public so that they can make an informed choice.

- Costs of the initial vaccinations and the follow up annual vaccinations are financially prohibitive to persons who own large numbers of stock. Some unfounded rumours have been made that this has become a money making exercise more than a public safety concern.
- It is widely accepted that there are areas/regions which are high risk areas for contraction of this virus, likewise there are many areas where the risk level is so low that it would not be seen as necessary to vaccinate a horse. The horse industry sees a high level of movement of stock through sale, competition, working stock and breeding. Will this require that every horse in Australia be vaccinated with Equi Vacc and, if so how would this be governed?
- Conflicting reports are now emerging about the timeframe required between annual vaccinations with horses originally having to be vaccinated 6 monthly now being moved out to annually. Testing is now showing that horses well over this 12month

mark have full immunity. This raises concerns of the overuse of the vaccine and the detrimental effects this may have on stock. The Hendra vaccine was released in 2012, but is still being assessed by the APVMA and is yet to be registered. Only vets who have been issued a permit by the APVMA can administer the vaccine. It is difficult for vets to critique the vaccine because it puts them in an awkward position with many industry groups and veterinary authorities who support its use.

- The majority of horse owners feel that their choice to vaccinate their stock has been taken away after the prosecution of a Vet for failing to meet safety standards when attending a horse, forcing Veterinary Surgeons to refuse treatment of unvaccinated animals who are showing signs which could indicate the presence of Hendra Virus. Veterinary Surgeons due to fear of facing substantial fines and court action, are now taking the option that they cannot attend an unvaccinated horse for diagnosis and treatment, but can attend only to euthanize the said animal. This has seen a downturn in business for Veterinarians, causing severe financial hardship for many Practices. This also raises concerns over animal welfare and what if thru the adoption of this practice an emerging different epidemic is then undetected. We don't believe that the guidelines/procedures required for these Veterinarians are proportionate to the consequences, and are therefore restricting them from providing services.
- Most Owners realise the impact of Workplace Health & Safety actions which have forced the decision for Vets not to attend unvaccinated horses and would willingly agree to bearing extra costs for the supply of PPE for those attending an unwell animal to ensure the safety of the professionals attending stock.
- Our club's activities are based around Cutting Horses, these animals are athletes, and their value is gauged by their ability to perform. Loss of the ability to work athletically undermines the value of these animals not only to those who compete as amateurs, but professional competitors who may face severe financial loss through an animal becoming unable to compete at a money earning level. Rural Proprietors where these animals are used as a tool, also face losses due to an animal possibly becoming unable to perform work tasks. Most of us who have taken the option to vaccinate our horses have witnessed that while some horses appear to have no reaction to the vaccine, others may develop reactions ranging from moderate - temperature, swelling of injection sight and muscle stiffness and being generally unwell after the 2nd or 3rd injection. People who have contacted their Veterinarians after noticing these affects have been advised not to go ahead with the subsequent follow up vaccinations. While no member of our Club has experienced the death of an animal due to the Equi Vacc Vaccine, reports of loss of stock have raised major concerns.
- The Cutting Horse Industry is a rapidly growing sector. Bloodstock is of Quarter Horse Breeding, which thru its versatility is used in many other disciplines. Their versatility has seen a rapid growth in the rise for demand of this breed. Breeders have raised concerns over the long term effects the Equi Vacc Vaccine on Breeding stock and subsequent progeny. To date no conclusive evidence has been provided that there will be no ongoing adverse genetic or physical effects through use of the vaccine.

- It is our understanding that no Thoroughbreds in the Racing Industry are being forced to be vaccinated due to the fact that they may be of exceptional standard and be able to compete on the overseas circuit or sold overseas as bloodstock. This is because a vaccinated horse would show signs of the virus, making it unable to be determined if the horse was shedding the virus or is a vaccinated animal - this then prohibits them from being exported. Is this also prohibitive to other breeds which excel in their field for exportation?

Please accept this written submission voicing some of our member's concerns. Our Club looks forward to receiving ongoing information seeking a resolve of the current issues

Yours truly

Janice Turner

Secretary

Beauesert Cutting & Western Performance Club.