



21st April 2016

The Agriculture and Environment Committee Hendra Vaccine Inquiry
Parliament House
Brisbane
Queensland 4000
By email: aec@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear AEC Committee Members,

We are a mixed practice located in SE Queensland with three veterinarians and four nursing team members who provide a wide variety of equine ambulatory services to horse owners within our region. Hendra Virus has been a hot topic for several years now, with the closest Hendra incident located at Lowood less than 30 kilometres away. Our practice has worked hard to establish and maintain a core of dedicated horse owners who fully support not only preventative vaccination but also the close working relationship we have with them, and their horses.

Our team has been proactive in working with local equestrian event organisers to ensure that public safety, as well as competitor safety are considered when hosting equestrian events in our area. At all times we work within the constraints of Workplace Health & Safety and Biosecurity QLD guidelines when attending sick, unvaccinated horses. We strongly believe that these guidelines are imperative to protect horse owners and our own team from unnecessary risk while attending these cases. However the lack of consultation and collaboration available from Workplace Health & Safety has been shocking, leaving the equine veterinary community to interpret and deliver mostly unworkable, unpopular and unsustainable protocols. This ultimately has resulted in the unrequired and overbearing prosecution of three of our equine veterinary colleagues.

The Equivac HeV vaccine provided under a Minor Use Permit in November 2012 has been integrated into our preventative health care recommendations without issue. Our practice has delivered more than 1250 doses to a wide variety of equines, including donkeys, foals from 4 months of age,



working stallions, pregnant broodmares and lactating broodmares. To this time we have observed the occasional horse who develops neck swelling, with no other adverse reactions reported on any of the Equivac HeV vaccines delivered by our veterinary team. The vaccination is often delivered in conjunction with other preventative health care measures such as dentistry, which enables us to deliver a vaccine dose from \$75 - \$130 per horse. We feel that this is a small price to pay for the ongoing protection of a horse, a family, and all equine industry members (farriers, lay dentists, chiropractors, veterinarians, riders/jockeys) who may have to work with this horse at some time.

The anti-vaccination community has been very successful at disseminating incorrect and sensational information about the HeV vaccination as well as generally smearing the good name, character and reputation of many equine veterinarians and horse owners who firmly believe in the benefits of Hendra virus vaccination. Industry driven vaccine mandates for contagious and zoonotic disease are in place internationally and our inability to deal with the Hendra threat in a decisive and proactive manner makes the equine industry in Australia appear foolish.

Our veterinary practice as a whole would like to express our support for the Equivac HeV vaccine and commend those owners who can see the risk and choose to act in a responsible manner. We would also like to condemn the actions of Workplace Health & Safety for their bumbling absence of 'real world' practical understanding and their calculated prosecution of several equine veterinarians. The noisy anti-vaccination community has merely served to put lives at risk (often their own) with the pursuit of an alternative agenda that does not serve the public, or their horse.

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