

Wvong Equine Clinic

Equine Veterinary Surgeons

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15 April 2016

The Agriculture and Environment Committee Hendra Vaccine Inquiry
Parliament House
Brisbane
Queensland 4000
Phone: 07 3553 6660
By email: aec@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear AEC Committee Members,

RE: Submission to Hendra virus Vaccine Inquiry

My name is Dr Brett Jones, and I am an equine veterinarian located at Wyong, Central Coast NSW. I have been in equine veterinary practice for 30 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 vaccine our practice has administered ~ 4900 doses of the vaccine. The incidence of adverse reactions was difficult to ascertain accurately, and I feel that clients have become increasingly less tolerant of a reaction to Hendra virus vaccine than they were of other regularly used injections.

In terms of truly adverse reactions that may have had long term effects on the horse, I would say we had maybe one, and the issues that followed with that horse could have been deemed circumstantial. I would have estimated at most that ~ 1 in 20 had a reaction of some form, which is

not to dissimilar to say, pentosan polysulphate, a commonly used joint medication willingly used by many clients.

I viewed that vaccine as safe. I trust the research on its efficacy and reliability.

I work in an area that has not yet had a Hendra positive.

When the vaccine was released in November 2012 I confess I was ambivalent.

There had not been a Hendra positive south of the border since the Macksville some 18 months prior, and I thought the vaccine would be too expensive to push onto clients given the perceived low risk in our area.

My mood, and that of our clients changed with the Hendra positives at Kempsey in July 2013.

Our practice did not aggressively market the vaccination.

The positives at Kempsey quite rightly spooked people, and the demand was client driven.

The equestrian bodies who instituted mandatory vaccination did so to mitigate risk for their event organisers.

On 26 Feb 2015 I attended a general meeting of Equestrian NSW, at which there was fierce opposition to the vaccination policy of ENSW. Some of this opposition was from people I recognised who, at the time of the Kempsey positives, more that willingly wanted their horses vaccinated. I spoke at this meeting and one of the points I raised was that people seemed to have forgotten the mood at the time of the Kempsey positives.

As a practice owner, I found the time of the Macksville and Kempsey positives one of the most stressful times I have had in practice. That was with the positives several hundred kilometers away. I would think twice about working as a horse vet in the affected areas of Northern NSW and beyond.

I cannot imagine how difficult it must be as a horse practitioner (as an employee or employer) in Queensland, where the Hendra threat is real, there (bizarrely) still exists opposition to vaccination, and a vet can be held personally liable for not taking adequate precautions in dealing with a sick horse that eventuates as a Hendra positive.

The vaccine is an effective way of preventing a disease with catastrophic consequences.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
Brett Jones BVSc.

Wyong Equine Clinic.

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