



Flash Veterinary Services

Submission No. 164

Heidelberg Heights VIC 3081

21 April 2016

The Agriculture and Environment Committee Hendra Vaccine Inquiry  
Parliament House  
Brisbane Queensland 4000

By email: [aec@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:aec@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear AEC Committee Members,

**RE: Submission to the Qld Parliament's Hendra virus Vaccine Inquiry**

My name is Meredith Flash and I am an Equine Veterinarian, small business owner, wife and mother. I operate a veterinary business in Victoria that provides locum services to equine veterinary practices in Victoria and Queensland. I am an active member of Equine Veterinarians Australia, a special interest group of the Australian Veterinary Association.

I would like to speak to the terms of reference:

*2) the incidence and impact of adverse reactions by horses following vaccination and the reporting of adverse reactions and economic impacts of the HeV EquiVacc® vaccine;*

Working in the various practices, I have vaccinated over 100 horses, several multiple times. I have had 5 horses with adverse reactions, the most severe of which was a temperature of 39.1 degrees Celsius and swelling at the injections site. All of the horses that had reactions recovered completely. In my experience, this is not uncommon for vaccination of any type. I have also experienced similar reactions when administering the EI vaccine in 2007-2008 as part of the control and eradication campaign. I was called to a horse where the owner suspected colic but was found to have a temperature and injection site reaction to the 2 in 1 vaccine (Tetanus and Strangles) that the owner had administered. The incidence and the mild reactions that have occurred in the horses I have vaccinated, were consistent with the incidence and reactions to other vaccinations I have administered.

*5) the impact of Workplace Health and Safety actions on the decision by veterinarians not to attend unvaccinated horses and results of previous Workplace Health and Safety HeV investigations where there have been human infections.*

Working as a veterinarian can be so rewarding helping horses that are ill or injured or sore to return them to health, and helping horses and their owners to reach their goals. But it is also a profession that comes with risks; the risk of being injured by a powerful flight animal, the stress of being on call and available sometimes 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and the emotional impact of sometimes being limited in how we can assist those horses and owners due to safety, situation or financial constraints.

As stated above, I have worked as a locum in Queensland. In deciding to accept the locum position, the vaccination policy of the clinic was an important factor. I spoke at length with the practice owners while I was there and they did not make the decision to put a Hendra vaccination policy in place lightly.



-2-

The practice is a combined 24-hour clinic and hospital for small animals that had an attached equine ambulatory and hospital based practice. The practice is located quite close to Redlands where there was a previous outbreak.

Owners were trying to find a balance between meeting their WHS obligations, guarding against any adverse consequences that could occur if one of their veterinarians attended a HeV positive horse and the welfare of the horses in their care. It was difficult to see some of the decisions they had to make in order to achieve that balance.

Veterinarians, regrettably, are used to being put in difficult positions when deciding to attend a sick horse. There can be times where the client has a history of not paying where the veterinarian must decide to take a risk of providing treatment for which they may never recover the costs, which can range from a few hundred dollars to a couple thousand. With regards to HeV infection they must weigh up the additional costs of possible business interruption, WHS prosecution and the fines they could incur if found to have not followed the 3 different guidelines to the satisfaction of the government office.

One of the reasons I started my business was to help veterinarians. Veterinarians often compromise their own health and wellbeing for the health and welfare of the animals in their care. I look after their business or ensure that they are not short staffed, so that they can have time off. The emotional toll of having to make business decisions that are in conflict with their compassionate nature is one that I am seeing frequently.

I look forward to the inquiry providing some clarity to both horse owners and veterinarians in regards to this difficult issue.

Kind regards,

Dr. Meredith Flash BVSc, CMAVA, Cert IVAS