

From: [REDACTED]  
To: [Agriculture and Environment Committee](#)  
Subject: Fwd: Hendra Virus/Vaccine Inquiry  
Date: Friday, 29 April 2016 1:13:03 PM

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**Subject:**Hendra Virus/Vaccine Inquiry  
**Date:**Mon, 18 Apr 2016 11:54:16 +1000  
[REDACTED]  
**To:**[aec@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:aec@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to make the following submission to the above inquiry as follows:

As a horse owner for 31 years and having been involved in horse for some 36 years of my life, I can never remember an issue that has had the horse community in such alarm and disgust at the same time as the emerging non-treatment by vets for horses that are not vaccinated for Hendra. There is no common sense being used here and a lot of unnecessary panic being elevated by vets regarding their risk of contracting this disease when treating sick horses. As most of us who have done research into this disease now know that it has been with us for a very long time and for whatever reason its emergence has been relatively recent, with the spike in cases in 2011 particularly in Qld where the weather events of that year seemingly played a part in this.

So we have a virus that is really still relatively unresearched in real terms, with the mode of transmission still not 100% proven that bats are the true single vector. Over the years there has no doubt been hundreds even thousands of wild virus cases where horses and/or other species of animal have no doubt caught and either died or survived this extremely weak virus. My first and major response to this "no vacc no treat" policy being implemented by those who are supposed to be highly trained professionals is simply one question - WHY HAS NO HORSE OWNER/CHILD/STRAPPER/MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC/RIDER EVER CONTRACTED THIS VIRUS EVER AT ANY PROPERTY/SHOW/EVENT ANYWHERE AT ANYTIME IN THIS COUNTRY? I have asked this question many times and no-one can or is willing to give me a substantiated truthful answer - why? BECAUSE THEY CANNOT.

The only persons who have contracted this virus have been Vets or people assisting them performing invasive internal procedures or necropsies without the use of PPE. Government regulations state that PPE is adequate protection against this virus when treating sick horses, however the veterinary profession is using this fear campaign of being sued by the WH&S as an excuse not to treat. We then have the wonderful excuses by vets with all sorts of reasons not to use PPE - it takes too long to put on; it's expensive (they receive a government subsidy and also can claim back on their tax - a double dip it seems); it's too hot to use in Qld (tell this to firefighters who use their required protection when fighting fires in scorching temperatures); it scares the horses (I like this one the best - but honestly I think if a horse is THAT sick I don't think it really cares what you are wearing); it can be knocked off by a horse sneezing (this one makes me chuckle too); it can invoke a dangerous situation as you can't see properly with it on and a horse might go to kick you and you can't see it coming - my husband has been trimming and shoeing for 25 years and I think his risk is much higher of being kicked than a vet wearing PPE - they need to use common sense and be smart when moving around a sick animal then don't they? PPE should be standard industry practice in their line of work not just when dealing with potential Hendra virus cases but other infectious diseases and this is set out in their own industry guidelines as well as government guidelines. Government protocol does not prevent vets from treating unvaccinated horses, it states that they are required to simply use PPE. Due to the fact that this virus is very hard to catch, simple gloves mask and goggles will no doubt in reality protect the vet from infection. The "no vacc no treat" is itself animal abuse and is a total and absolute disgrace, leaving owners lives shattered and children

devastated in some cases. Vets have an oath they deem to abide by and this policy fails that oath on every level. If this policy continues to be implemented, it will sound the death knell of the horse industry long term, particularly in Qld and eventually its repercussions will follow throughout other states, which it already has done as the "no vacc no treat" scenario is rearing its ugly head in southern states even where the virus has never occurred. This vaccine is about greed - greed by big pharma who incite fear mongering in their advertising campaign for this vaccine by making such statements like - you are risking your childrens lives by not vaccinating. Again, has there EVER been any known cases where a child or owner has contracted this disease anywhere in this country in their day to day handling of their horses - the simple answer is NO NOT EVER NOT ONE SINGLE CASE.

I have not and will not vaccinate my horses ever with this vaccine. It was rushed on to the market in late 2012 without adequate testing at a cost to horse owners that is ridiculous considering the recommended injection regime. The developer of the vaccine Deborah Middleton from the CSIRO has stated that the initial boosters and annual follow up is more than likely adequate protection for possibly the lifetime of the animal and that the current regime of six monthly boosters is overkill and dangerous. I was like many others eagerly awaiting the release of this product, but erred initially on the side of caution when I researched its background. My local vet, of course, tried to push it on to me but I resisted thankfully. Then as time went on came the reported reactions from horse owners, the majority of which were refuted by vets as being inconsequential or not related to the vaccine. The main issue here is that horse owners KNOW THEIR HORSES BETTER THAN ANYONE not vets, and when their horse develops a reaction within hours days or even months (as sometimes it takes this long) of being injected and this is occurring in hundreds if not thousands of horses, one begins to think that we might have a problem here. As for vets not taking any of this seriously, do they really think that horse owners would "invent" these reactions - what for attention or what? Do they think horse owners are fools and are making this sort of thing up? Do they think you want to see your horse suffering from a debilitating condition that in many cases has rendered the horse permanently useless and unrideable and has the cost owner thousands of dollars trying to fix their issues sometimes to no avail? Have you seen a horse trying to eat after a vaccine reaction where its neck is so sore and swollen for weeks on end it cannot even drop its head to graze - you would have to be a callous and cruel individual not to let this affect you. The attitude of vets towards owners whose horses have suffered either mild through to severe reactions is nothing short of insulting. On top of this many of the reported reactions are not being recorded correctly or vets are failing to report reactions when their owners are asking them to as they are dismissing them or are in denial. There is an official list of over 70 types of reported reactions - how can this be safe or normal to the horse? This vaccine is using the general horse population as guinea pigs due to the lack of sufficient testing. During the trials they COULD NOT successfully transmit the virus from horse to horse even when they had an infected horse stabled next to an uninfected horse. On top of this horse owners are being called ungrateful members of the community when they don't immunise - what is ungrateful about not wanting your animal to be maimed or die from something that is supposed to protect them? This whole scenario beggars belief. Why is it the racing industry refuses to introduce mandatory vaccination? Because they know that it will see the racing industry in Qld die a natural death due to vaccines invoking a lack of performance in horses as was the case with the EI vaccine, after which many horses failed miserably or never raced again. Why are vets still treating unvaccinated race horses who obviously get colic/sick just like the pleasure horses do? Because they KNOW THE RISK IS MINIMAL/NEGLIGIBLE for catching this disease and to refuse treatment for racehorses for some would mean a severe or total loss of income. The pleasure horse industry is being made a scapegoat for this vaccine as the racing industry has the power and might to say no to mandatory vaccination ie big pharma, whereas your everyday backyard horse owner does not. We all know that Zoetis is pushing this vaccine as hard as possible in order to recover their development costs as the uptake has been relatively poor due to safety concerns and the exorbitant costs in their overkill 6 monthly injection regime for the entire lifetime of the animal.

What about the risk at abattoirs where horses are killed and their entrails organs are blood are everywhere? I can guarantee these horses are not vaccinated before their poor lives are sadly expunged as to wait the recommended time frame for the vaccine to be effective would be not only cost prohibitive but uneconomical and physically unviable to house these animals for the required period of time. What about horses that are sold at public sales? - they are not all vaccinated and people including children touch/pet these horses in pens prior to them being

offered for sale. Has there ever been any adults or children infected from this avenue either? - the answer is once again - NO!! NOT EVER.

There have been recent cases of horse who have had their titre levels test months or even years after their last Hendra vaccination, and their levels of cover are still EXTREMELY HIGH - into the thousands even. A titre level of 16 officially provides adequate protection which has been proven to be achieved after the initial or even only the second injection - so why are we trying to vaccinate every six months? GREED GREED and more GREED.

Mandatory vaccination for horse events will not only kill the horse sporting/showing/pony club industry but the flow on will be devastating like with the EI debacle. We all know how thousands of people employed by the industry suffered or went to the wall during this poorly managed fiasco. I already know older breeders/people who have older horses and have stated that once their horses die they will not be replacing them and will get out of horses altogether, due to the possible heartbreak of losing their loved equines by veterinary refusal to treat if they fall ill.

Whilst I have mentioned cost as being a factor, if I really thought that my horses were a such terrible risk of contracting this disease I would not hesitate to pay the cost and if you ask the majority of horse owners, cost is not the highest factor that turns people off this vaccine - in fact it is one of our lowest concerns, the highest is the safety factor.

Veterinary refusal to treat unvaccinated horses is a horse owners biggest concern right at this point in time and to be totally honest I have not spoken to one horse owner that I have might or know who is in favour of this vaccine. I have an acquaintance that is a non-practising vet and her view is that the whole thing is about money. Our horses are not able to speak for themselves and we as their owners are obliged to do this for them - THE HENDRA VACCINE IS NOT A SAFE PRODUCT; VETERINARY REFUSAL TO TREAT UNVACCINATED SICK HORSES IS UNETHICAL UNPROFESSIONAL AND AN ACT OF ANIMAL CRUELTY AND UNNECESSARY GIVEN THERE IS AVAILABLE PROTECTION IF A HENDRA CASE IS SUSPECTED. This intolerable situation cannot continue and a resolution must be achieved where legally vets MUST treat sick horses using PPE as adequate protection and are unable to refuse. My own local vet recently completed dental work on all of my three horses using only disposable gloves and a facial mask for protection - no eye goggles even. Considering the amount of saliva flowing out of a horses mouth when their teeth are being floated one would think that eye goggles would be a necessity considering their supposed/alleged risk (in their words) of contracting this virus. They know the truth but the money trail sees them engaging in fearmongering spurred on by the drug companies.

I live less than 10 klms from a past Hendra outbreak; we have bats flying over our property regularly at night time and honestly I am not one bit concerned about me or my horses contracting this virus and am dismayed disgusted and deeply concerned by the whole "no vacc no treat" policy considering there has NEVER been a casual infection EVER.

Sadly money talks and that is where we are at with this whole debacle.

Yours faithfully

Tracey Huenerberg

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