

21 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,

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


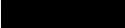
My name is Dr Tessia Salmond BVSc (Hons) and I am a practice partner/director of the Clermont Veterinary Surgery in Clermont in central QLD. I graduated from the University of Queensland with first class honours in 2004. I have worked my entire career in north Queensland where Hendra Virus has been a constant threat.

I was personally exposed to a positive hendra infected horse in Bowen in 2009. I was asked to look at the horse for a friend because it was lame! This just goes to show that Hendra virus can present really as any illness in a horse which makes a job very difficult and dangerous. I was deemed to be "very high risk" exposure by QLD health. I had to go through extensive blood testing regimes and an agonising wait to then find out that I was extremely lucky not to have caught the virus (unlike two of my esteemed colleagues the year before who had caught the virus from a horse they were treating had died). Had there been a vaccine available then, and these horses had all been vaccinated, two of my colleagues would still be alive and I wouldn't have had such a horrific ordeal. There are only about 500 vets in QLD that treat horses - 2 of these are dead. These are extremely ordinary odds for any occupation.

I have personally vaccinated over 500 horses. I have heard or seen only about 10 reactions - all mild such as a swelling at injection site, and all horses recovered completely. I have seen far more reactions from other vaccines we give horses such as the strangles vaccine or intramuscular injections of certain antibiotics or antiinflammatories. My husband and I have vaccinated over 20 horses belonging to our family and never had a drama with any of them. I sincerely believe that this vaccine is very safe and very effective.

The whole Workplace Health and Safety issues is frightening. It feels like they are making vets the scapegoats. All of the 3 cases in which the vets are being prosecuted in QLD by WH&S make me frightened to go about by daily busy because I would have done exactly what these vets did - they are all excellent vets and I believed they handled the cases as best could be expected. We follow the guidelines by Biosecurity QLD in handling suspect Hendra cases but these can be ambiguous and I can definitely understand why many vets feel frightened to treat a sick unvaccinated horse as they are not only worried about their own safety, but also the risk of prosecution from Workplace Health and Safety. I have, and always will, treat sick unvaccinated horses, but it is an incredible stressful experience everytime.

Yours sincerely,


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