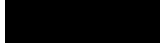
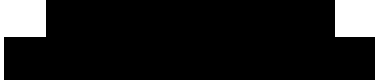


# Brookleigh Stud

  
*Kenilworth QLD*

*4574*

*ABN: 85 216 442 904*  


22 April 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Leigh Ann Sample. My husband Brook and I are the owners of Brookleigh Stud, an endurance training and breeding stud. We own 100 horses and manage another 80. The 180 horses for which we are responsible include foals, young horses, horses-in-training, broodmares, stallions and retired horses. Brook is the 7 time Australian National Champion and has represented Australia 4 times in Endurance World Championships and World Equestrian Games, placing 8<sup>th</sup> in the World at one of those events. We write out of great concern for what is happening in the horse industry due to the Hendra Vaccination and the Work Place Health and Safety laws that affect both veterinarians and horse owners.

## **1. The development, trials and approval processes**

We have spoken to many veterinarians and to Zoetis representatives regarding this process. We understand that all items in the vaccine have been used before and are not “new,” but everyone with whom we have spoken, including the Veterinary Board, have said that public demand for a vaccine immediately caused the vaccine to be released faster than the normal procedure. The failure for the normal due diligence creates substantial risk for the horses and the industry.

There are many unknowns about this disease and the vaccine as a result of the shortcuts in the normal process. Zoetis sent a representative, Sue Huxley, out to see us only two day ago to make us “feel comfortable” with the vaccine. It only made us more concerned. She said that veterinarians are

currently recommending/allowing horse owners to wait up to 12 months between their booster vaccinations after the first three as they think the vaccine is safe up until that point and are waiting for approval to change the label on the vaccine to make it official. She admitted “there is no definitive way to diagnose Hendra from physical symptoms”. Similarly, the normal trials that are required to prove the vaccine’s validity, required amounts, and safety cannot be done due to the time constraints. These requirements cannot be met except through time and numbers. Right now we have neither. Without testing under controlled circumstances we are putting all horses and the entire industry at risk with an untested and expensive vaccine and procedure. The pressure put on veterinarians through work place health safety is unfair to them, financially impossible for owners, and risky to the health of the horses.

## **2. The incidence and impact of adverse reactions by horses following vaccination and the reporting of adverse reactions and economic impacts of the vaccine.**

We have refused to vaccinate our horses, so I cannot speak first hand to the effect of the vaccine on the horses. I have, however, taken a lot of time speaking with people first hand regarding their concerns about the vaccine.

I have questioned veterinarians and Zoetis regarding the reaction of the horses to the vaccine. Outside of a reaction within the first 48 hours of the vaccine given, they consider any bad reaction following vaccination is not the result of the vaccine. The problem is that their guess that the reaction is not due to the vaccine is without the benefit of testing. My conversation with the Zoetis representative regarding horses foundering within 10 days of the vaccination is exemplary. She said: “If you think about it, there are so many things that happen to horses that we don’t understand. Founder is one of them so it would be near impossible to attribute it to the vaccine.” I immediately stopped her and told her, on the contrary, founder is probably one of the things in horses that the causes are clear and traceable. One of those causes is stress to the horse’s system.

The sport of endurance interacts with veterinarians more than all other equine sports. It is also the sport where riders spend the most time with a horse in one session. One of our events, for example, can take up to 24 hours, about 19 of them on the horse’s back. As a result, we understand our horses more than most riders, and often more than the veterinarians. I have

been at an event where I have said to the vet, there is something not right about my horse. The vet insisted the horse has passed all of the veterinary parameters and was fine to continue the event. The horse ended up in the vet clinic at the end of the event. At a national championship event, I had a veterinarian tell me if I did not withdraw my horse or seriously slow him down, he would not finish and be at great risk. The horse went on to win the event.

The point is that things are not always black and white with horses based on meeting perfect parameters. There needs to be investigation of the reactions of horses to the vaccine by someone other than the manufacturer that has a stake in the result. There are too many situations of seemingly perfectly healthy horses having adverse reactions to the vaccine to conclude that “it must have been caused by something else”. For example, horses might have had undetected underlying issues exacerbated by the vaccine. The risk of giving an untested vaccine to horses is serious.

### **3. Who bears the risks of HeV infection and who incurs the costs and receives the benefits from each risk mitigation option**

I have asked the following question to every vet that I have come in contact with since the inquiry has been announced: “Are you more concerned about contracting Hendra Virus or a out being sued?” Not one was more concerned about contracting Hendra.

### **4. Whether the guidelines/procedures required for the veterinarian attending horses that are not vaccinated against HeV are proportionate to the consequences.**

This is a question that can be answered only by the veterinarians. My experience watching the vets treat our horses is that they do not seem worried about the effect on them of treating our horses.

### **5. Impact on the equine industry and the economy arising from veterinarians applying a policy not to treat unvaccinated horses.**

Financially, we would not be able to continue our business if we had to vaccinate all of our horses. We currently employ 10 full time staff members and contract at least another 5 subcontractors on a weekly basis. We support

our local businesses in the rural feed barn, the supermarket, the local vet, and the local garage. We even support the local pizza restaurant by purchasing pizza once a week for our staff. If we were to go out of business, this would have a major trickle-down effect on the town of Kenilworth. This is a reality due to the “no vax – no vet” policy many vets are putting in place.

Horses must be able to receive veterinary care. In addition, we are put at risk as employers due to the clear implication between the lines of the Biosecurity requirements and Workplace Health and Safety Laws that if we do not vaccinate our horses we will be liable.

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

The virus is impossible to detect from physical symptoms alone. To ask owners and vets to prepare for this or risk being sued is an unreasonable task. It is the same as telling every shop owner, school ground, or any other place no matter how small, they can be sued for not protecting their employees or clients from terrorist attacks if they do not install metal detectors and security screening before allowing anyone in. Statistically and financially the law makes no sense. By asking horse owners to vaccinate every horse they own or risk being sued or not being able to treat the animal, is dangerous to the animal, not to mention the death knell to an industry.

The reality is there is a greater risk of getting injured or even dying from working with a horse, riding a horse, or driving to a horse event, than there is of contracting the Hendra Virus from a horse. The law should be supportive of an understanding that Hendra is just another risk you take when involving your life with horses. Provided people are informed of the risk and understand they are around unvaccinated horses, they can assess their own risk make their own decision as to work with horses or not; just as they do when they sign waivers to understand horses are unpredictable and they are engaging in a high risk sport.

More time is needed to research the Hendra Virus and the vaccine before indirect mandatory vaccination is forced upon horse owners. A suggestion is that a \$1.00 - \$2.00 levy is placed on all horse events Australia wide,

including thoroughbred racing, for either more research on the virus and vaccine, or for subsidizing the cost of the vaccine if at the end of the inquiry it is deemed safe and mandatory to vaccinate.

This virus affects all horse owners in Australia as “Hendra Hot Spot” horses travel nation-wide to compete in events. In addition, it is only a matter of time before the disease is detected and spread to anywhere that has bats.

Sincerely,

Leigh Ann Sample  
Co-Owner/Operator of Brookleigh Stud

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