



Queensland Horse Industry Alliance Inc.

Uniting the Queensland Horse Industry!

Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

22/4/16

Queensland Horse Industry Alliance [QHIA] submission to the committee's inquiry into the Hendra virus (HeV) Equivac vaccine and its use by veterinary surgeons in Queensland, including the potential efficiency and effectiveness of options to mitigate the risk of infection with HeV and its consequences.

1. Background

The Queensland Horse Industry Alliance Inc. was formed in April 2009 post Equine Influenza. The organisation is committed to improving the level of recognition of the horse industry, providing a united voice to the Government on industry needs and national equine issues, as well as providing a mechanism through which the industry can be rallied and represented in times of horse related crises.

As such, there is a history of various levels of collaboration and information sharing between the parties in the pursuit of or a more united and proactive horse community.

2. Aim of the QHIA

The Alliance aims to:

- Maintain communication and co-operation as well as enhance partnership opportunities between members of the Alliance.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities to improve planning and collaboration between Alliance members in relation to the performance horse industry.
- Gain a greater awareness and understanding of the demographics of the performance horse industry and its subsequent economic impact.
- Address directed issues or business related matters of concern to industry members.
- Be at the forefront of policy formulation
- Become a Department of Primary Industry and Forestry stakeholder.

3. Purpose of the QHIA

The purpose of the QHIA is to strengthen the working relationship between all member bodies in their approach to the performance horse industry, by providing a process for the:

- Enhancement of collaborative and/or complimentary action in the support, development and growth of the performance horse industry.



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- Articulation of the respective roles and responsibilities of Alliance members in relation to the performance horse industry.
- Identification of mutual priorities and the development and implementation of joint plans to address such roles and responsibilities where appropriate.
- Co-ordination where possible of policy, planning, infrastructure and service provision as it impacts on the performance horse industry.
- Joint negotiation with the State and Federal Government, where necessary, on the implications of State or Federal Government equine policy within Queensland.

4. QHIA members include:-

- Australian Campdraft Association
- Equestrian Queensland
- Queensland Chamber of Agriculture Shows
- Queensland Endurance Riders Association
- Queensland Polo Association
- Queensland Polocrosse
- Queensland Pony Club
- South Queensland Management Branch of the Australian Stock Horse Society

QHIA member organisations represent a total of greater than 36,000 members and 600 clubs/committees running equestrian events every year.

QHIA believes that in the absence of Government legislation requiring mandatory vaccination, individual horse owners should be free to make their own choice whether or not to Hendra vaccinate their horses based on their individual circumstances.

QHIA member organisation's biosecurity policies were developed in consultation with a diverse range of stakeholders including equine veterinarians and is based on a revise and review approach. It acknowledges the advice of Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, Queensland Health, and Biosecurity Queensland, that vaccination is the single most effective way of reducing the risk of Hendra virus infection in horses and provides a work health and safety and public health benefit. Strategic vaccination of horses is encouraged and horse owners are advised to discuss their individual risk with their private veterinarian.



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QHIA has been at the forefront of development of a comprehensive suite of biosecurity policies, plans and supporting documents that have been endorsed by all relevant government departments and the Australian Horse Industry Council, and adopted by event organisers across Australia.

QHIA response to terms of reference

- 1. The development, trials and approval processes: the incidence and impact of adverse reactions by horses following vaccination and the reporting of adverse reactions and economic impacts of the HeV Equivac vaccine.**
- 2. Who bears the risks of HeV infection and who incurs the costs and receives the benefits from each risk mitigation option.**
- 3. Whether the guidelines/procedures required for veterinarians attending horses that are not vaccinated against HeV are proportionate to the consequences.**

Many QHIA members have shared their concerns about the practice of vets refusing to treat unvaccinated horses until the negative HeV test results were returned. This included serious concerns about the welfare of horses that were denied treatment, and potential safety risks to humans who were trying to nurse sick horses without professional vet guidance.

- 4. Impacts on the equine industry and the economy arising from veterinarians applying a policy not to treat unvaccinated horses.**

The Royal National Association (RNA) Brisbane Show reported a 42 per cent decrease in entries in 2013 when it introduced mandatory vaccination, and a 25 per cent decrease in 2014.¹ If this trend was continued across industry, it would have a significant impact on equestrian event participation and attendance, the viability of which contributes to economic and social benefit to communities throughout Queensland.

- 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.**

QHIA believe the Workplace Health and Safety guidelines should be reviewed with Industry and Veterinary consultation. It is our understanding that these guidelines were written in 2011 and reviewed in 2013.

Conclusion

QHIA welcomes the committee's inquiry and acknowledges the depth and breadth of the terms of reference. QHIA has encouraged member organisations and their members to make a submission to the inquiry.

Kent Wells

Chairman

QHIA

¹ Report from Phillip Harpham on behalf of RNA council to Queensland Horse Industry Alliance 20 November 2014