

Submission to the Queensland Agriculture and Environment Committee

For consideration in
The Parliamentary Inquiry into Hendra Virus (HeV) Equivac®
Vaccine and its use by veterinary surgeons in Queensland,
2016.

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

This vaccine, in my opinion, has gone through similar development, trials and approval as any other vaccine that is available on the Australian market. The Australian requirements are very strict and must be met before any product is allowed to be sold.

There have been many studies done that show that this vaccine is safe and effective, one of these studies can be found at this link: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/20/3/pdfs/13-1159.pdf>
I am sure that many more studies will be provided to you by the AVA, Zoetis etc. so I won't bother linking any more.

This is an example of some of the lies being spread by a member of the anti-Hendra vaccination group:

"Jennie Lea
April 28 at 6:57pm ·

ATTENTION AUSTRALIAN HORSE OWNERS

Yesterday I was given information regarding the horses used by Zoetis for the trials with the Vaccine..... You have been LIED TOO!

No trials took place until you started saying your horses were getting sick from the vaccine....

BUT When they did do a trial.... EVERY HORSE GOT SICK! Most had to be PTS they were that bad and no one wanted you to know!

Every pregnant mare that was given the vaccine, suffered from retained placenta, along with other problems, I don't believe any of the mares are still alive today!

In the 2nd lot of trials, the horses had only been on the vaccine for 18 months.... that's all, 18 months and every single one had to be PTS !!!

So in summery, all the horses used by Zoetis for trials Only After YOUR Horses got sick..... They ALL either are today dead, or Had to be PTS !!!

Zoetis and ALL the vets knew that the vaccine was killing horses, causing dangerous behaviour that could easily injure or kill a person if not handled carefully, they all suffered badly, they almost all had to major problems caused by the vaccine.

AND YET THEY TOLD YOU IT WAS SAFE!

THEY TOLD YOU YOUR HORSES WERE NOT HAVING REACTIONS TO THE VACCINE, IT WAS SOME THING ELSE, OR YOUR IMAGINATION!

YOU DIDN'T KNOW WHAT YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT!

And the whole time they knew it was the vaccine.... And the vets STILL demanded you use it on your horses, OR THEY WON'T ATTEND YOUR HORSE IF IT GETS SICK..... EVEN THOUGH THEY KNEW IT WAS THE VACCINE HARMING YOUR HORSES.....

PLEASE, PLEASE, SIGN AND SHARE THIS, LET OTHERS KNOW WHAT HAS BEEN DONE TO YOU!



QLD Government Agriculture and Environment Committee: CHAMPS join our group & help solve the...

Are you a horse owner, farrier, dentist, coach, agistment owner, vet, club representative, produce owner, saddlery owner, transporter, physio, chiro, masseur,...
change.org"

The anti-Hendra vaccine groups have been running a very large scare campaign, to try and get as many people to sign their petition, and unfortunately it seems to have been working. Many horse owners are scared out of using the vaccine, because of the many claims that are being made on the 'Say NO to the Hendra Vaccination (say YES to Pro Choice)' Facebook group and the 'Hendra virus - HeV - information page'. I have been blocked from viewing or posting on this group or page, due to not agreeing with everything that they post. If you do not agree with what they post, and ask them to provide evidence for their claims, then you will get banned from viewing and posting on the page. So to me this along with many of their views, does not make them 'Pro Choice' in any way, shape or form.

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.

The horse in the photos on the front page received two vaccinations when she was 18 months old (just before the photos). She had no adverse reactions. Her vaccination was not continued due to her being moved to Kyneton, Victoria for agistment as I sold my horse stud. The need to vaccinate this far south is not as high as in Qld or Northern NSW (although one day it may be).

In my opinion most of the claimed reactions that are shared on Facebook pages are exaggerated and in many cases lies. Some pages automatically assume that anything that happens, at any time after a horse has been vaccinated, is automatically an adverse reaction. They seem to forget, that horses for hundreds of years have been getting laminitis, colic, and many other illnesses. They refuse to consider any other cause for the illness that the horse may have.

There will be some genuine adverse reactions in horses, as they can happen with any drug or chemical that is given to any animal. But from speaking to the many horse owners that I know in person and on line, the adverse reaction rate is not very high from this vaccine. The worst reactions that have happened in people that I know have been swelling and pain at the vaccination site, with a mild fever in a couple of them. This is in line with the results that have been released by the APVMA on their site.

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

At this point in time I feel that the risk associated with HeV infection lies with the wrong party. The risk should lie with the person who chose not to vaccinate their horse, but it seems to lie with the poor veterinarian who has to try and treat that horse. The vet becomes responsible for any person on the infected property.

I can understand why vets may not want to take on the responsibility of treating unvaccinated horses. I have seen many situations where horse owners on Facebook have shared that the vet suspects Hendra in their horse, but that they don't think that it is, and that they are not taking the recommended precautions. They are even being advised by some, to give invasive treatments themselves, instead of waiting for the exclusion test results to come back.

An example of the lax attitude of some horse owners:

"Pam Haysom - Michelle Amanda I hope you are going to wear the full PPE that is required by WH&S when giving treatment or handling a possible Hendra case.

Michelle Amanda - Pam Haysom probably not, what are "Hendra symptoms" used to be just colic ect I'm not afraid never have been never will.

I'm more likely to be attacked by a shark (I rarely go to the beach) then I am to get Hendra.

I am vaccinating because unfortunately I am out of options with getting my horses treatment in a timely fashion, not for fear of Hendra or for my vets.

I really don't give a hoot about WH&S, what I choose to do on my own property with my own horses really is no one else's concern IMO."

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

The current guidelines to veterinarians are very strict and difficult for a vet to follow fully. Vets want to treat horses who are in pain and sick, but the guidelines make it very difficult for them, as they must rule Hendra in if it cannot be ruled out. That means that if a horse is not vaccinated, almost every illness or injury must be considered to be a possible Hendra case. The guidelines also make it

very hard for a vet to provide any kind of effective treatment to a horse until the exclusion tests come back.

A horse with colic may turn out to be Hendra, but it is more likely to be actual colic that the horse has. The delays that happen while waiting for the exclusion test to come back, will often mean that the horse will not survive. Owners do not like to see horses in pain. So if the owner does not want to vaccinate, they are not likely to follow the vet's advice about keeping away from the horse until the exclusion test come back. This puts the owner at risk, but as the vet is responsible for them under WH&S regulations. This is not a fair situation for the vet.

If an owner chooses not to vaccinate they should be the one who accepts the responsibility for their actions. If an owner who has chosen not to vaccinate then chooses to ignore vet advice, they should also be responsible for their own choices and actions. If a vet or other person catches Hendra from a horse which an owner has chosen not to vaccinate, then it should be the owner who is responsible for that. The owner who chooses not to take responsibility for their horse and the risks that that horse can pose to the public and other, should be the one that is held responsible.

In my opinion more responsibility needs to be shifted over to the owner of the horse. They need to be held responsible for their actions, rather than expect everyone else to take the risks associated with their choices/actions.

This is an example of the attitude that is held by many of the members of the anti-Hendra vaccination groups:

Brian Kennedy posted -

"I WOULD RECOMMEND THAT HORSE OWNERS DO NOT VACCINATE THEIR HORSES FOR HENDRA VIRUS. THE REASON YOU CAN FEEL COMFORTABLE IS THAT I HAVE NOTHING TO GAIN WHETHER YOU DO OR NOT, SOMETHING THAT CANNOT BE SAID FOR YOUR VET OR ZOETIS.

The reason for my recommendation is the fact that on my research many horses have died in the past 12 months either from adverse reaction to the vaccine or the lack of veterinary treatment through the vets refusing to treat unless vaccinated.

There is absolutely no reason for the vets to refuse treatment as ppe gives them 100% protection.

The vaccine on the other hand has caused numerous deaths of horses and more than 1000 adverse reactions and it does not guarantee your horse immunity as stated by the new APVMA permit conditions and therefore does not protect your vet either so their refusal to treat is dishonest promotion of and coercion to sell this vaccine. Given that the Australian bureau has given the statistics of infection of Hendra Virus at 100 million to one this scenario does not put any vet refusing treatment to any horse on the basis of vaccination in the realms of reality it is for the purpose of separating you from your money by the enforced sale of this product for profit.

My recommendation is not in anyway irresponsible reason being is that no person has ever been infected doing normal horse activities anywhere in this country. The irresponsibility is now with the vets because on the miniscule chance of your horse being infected the vaccine will according to the permit prevent the clinical symptoms of the disease making it possible for you to deal with an infected animal without knowing it, so vaccination should cease immediately.

The bat situation is another anomaly it is not proven that bats are the agent to horses and therefore

the scaremongering is fraudulent information, bats carry many diseases and therefore should be treated with due caution but no more for Hendra virus than a number of other diseases. The vets use this as scare tactics to sell the vaccine but it like the fact that horse to horse infection has not been proven just shows how under researched this whole issue is. The duration of immunity is an on going failure to the consumer and the only benefit of this vaccine is as a passive income to those vets pushing the sale of it, and creating a growing pool of adverse reactive horses. Don't trust a vet do your own research and make your own decision."

The above example that was written and posted by Brian Kennedy shows just how dangerous some of the advice that they share and give is. If everyone followed their advice we would have many more horses infected with Hendra and many more people who end up needing to get the experimental monoclonal antibody.

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

The costs associated with Hendra virus to industry and Government are difficult to calculate. As Hendra virus must be ruled out in suspect equine cases and these exclusion tests are paid for by the Government. This places an unfair expense on the rest of the non-horse owning public. Once a horse is confirmed as being infected, they are currently destroyed under the Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan. Thus far, Hendra virus is responsible for the loss of approximately 100 horses. Not only is this an economic loss to the owners, but this also represents emotional trauma.

Treating human cases of Hendra is exceedingly expensive. It further burdens healthcare services. High risk cases may require the use of the experimental monoclonal antibody therapy to prevent infection. Some of the human cases of Hendra have required ongoing healthcare and disability services, and the long term effects of the virus may render patients unable to work, this places additional strain on Government funds.

The majority of human Hendra cases have been veterinary workers, they are at an increased risk for the disease, as they will come into contact with it more often than the average horse owner will. Many professionals are no longer willing to accept this level of risk, which also includes a risk of prosecution if they (or anyone else involved with the horse) did not follow all WH&S procedures. Many vets are choosing to leave equine practice instead of dealing with the increased stresses associated with dealing with Hendra infected horses.

Many of the vets that have chosen to continue treating horses have implemented a "not vaccinated, no treatment" policy. And they often are on the receiving end of significant harassment from members of the anti-Hendra-vaccine movements. Veterinary workers need the support of the Australian public and the Queensland Parliament Agriculture and Environment Committee.

6. 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.

Vets need to be held accountable for their decisions in relation to wearing PPE when treating horses. PPE should be automatically worn, in all situations when treating horses. It is the amount of PPE that is worn, that will vary between cases, and will vary in relation to the risks associated with each horse.

The role of risk mitigation should fall on the heads of everyone in the equine industry. Recent updates to the Queensland Biosecurity Act 2004 places the responsibility of managing biosecurity risks on everyone, including industry and individuals. The General Biosecurity Obligation requires anyone whose activities pose a biosecurity threat to take all reasonable steps to ensure they do not spread a disease. The owning and keeping of horses poses many threats to biosecurity, with Hendra virus being the most serious due to its zoonotic potential and lethal virology. It is clear that “all reasonable steps” includes the use of the safe, effective, registered and affordable vaccine. The benefits of vaccinating horses against Hendra are received by more individuals, veterinary professionals, industry and Government than any other risk mitigation strategy. Vaccination is the only method by which Hendra virus disease in horses and humans can be prevented, thus protecting against the high cost associated with a deadly zoonotic disease.