

My name is Natalie Beohm and in 2008 at the age 21 my life was turned upside down by Hendra. I was doing my dream job as a vet nurse at Redlands Vet Clinic. Horses became ill and within 24 hours were euthanised. People believe you have to be in bodily fluids to contract Hendra, in my case that wasn't the case. I never helped or treated a horse when showing signs. I contracted it while the horses weren't showing signs of illness.

To hear 'you're positive' to Hendra is so different for me now. When I was 21 I had no idea what Hendra meant. I quickly learnt. I was in hospital for 6 weeks and my doctors were very surprised I was discharged, after tell my parents 'if she makes it till lunchtime we'll think what treatment can be given in the afternoon and if she makes it through the night we'll think about the morning treatment'. I lost the ability to walk, talk, feed myself and got swelling on the brain causing brain damage. I lost some use of my right side and hearing in my right ear. With temperatures over 40 Hendra just takes over your whole body and there is no stopping it. As Deb Middleton from the CSIRO said 'it's worse than Ebola virus'.

I have had lots of help and support to get to the place I am now but if I wasn't a strong person, I know the virus would have taken me. Doctors don't know if the virus will ever come back but I can't worry about that as there is nothing that can be done if it does.

I'm still in the vet industry and see both side of vaccinating and not vaccinating. The vaccine has been tested against a 1000 times more Hendra you will ever see in the environment and the vaccine did its job, no horses became infected (done at the CSIRO in Geelong). Every horse, human or dog can have reactions to vaccines or medications. Most of the reactions been plastered over Facebook have not been diagnosed 'reactions' by vets. Its people that haven't seen what this virus can do and want to blame the vaccine for anything, even if its weeks or years after getting vaccinated.

The public blame vets for not coming to unvaccinated horses but they have the right to go home to their loved ones at the end of the day. By the time horses are showing signs it's too late to turn back time. It's sad the only way people are going to take this virus seriously is when more people die.

If people don't want to vaccinate OHS rules should change and horse owners should become responsible for their own actions for both horse and treating vet. This virus is forever changing and is not to be messed with. I've faced Hendra and its scary and if we can protect as many horses and owners as we can, what's the crime in that? Look at all the vaccinations oversea horses have to have each year and people can't die from those diseases.

What gives people the right to risk other people's lives when horses, as sad as it is can be replaced but a father, son, husband can't be like Ben Cunneen.