



CLIFFORD GARDENS via Toowoomba
QUEENSLAND, 4350

Wednesday, 20th April, 2016

Submission Regarding the Hendra Virus Vaccination

ATT: Agriculture and Environment Committee

ABOUT THE TBQA

The Thoroughbred Breeders Queensland Association (TBQA) was founded over 40 years ago to promote and advance the interests of the breeding industry in Queensland. The racing industry needs to thrive for the breeding industry to prosper, and vice versa, therefore breeding and racing works hand-in-hand.

Our ten-person committee is part of a network of kindred organisations from each state which, with the federal body, Thoroughbred Breeders Australia (TBA), represents the interests of thoroughbred breeding throughout Australia at a state, federal and international level.

The TBQA boasts 1038 members, the largest membership base of any breeding association, and is the most respected of those Associations. Our President, Basil Nolan, is so highly regarded amongst his national peers, that he is the President of the TBA.

Over the years the TBQA has consistently endeavoured to represent the interest of the breeding and racing industry and has played a vital role in implementing many changes – from retaining Group and Listed races in Queensland, to developing management plans for EI and Hendra Virus, along with providing assistance to producers or members in need during drought and floods.

HENDRA VIRUS VACCINATION – OUR STANCE

The TBQA is not opposed to the Hendra Virus vaccination itself, and we believe people should have the right to vaccinate if they wish. We are however, vehemently opposed to any mandatory vaccination, or being forced to vaccinate by veterinarians who will refuse to treat unvaccinated horses.

The thoroughbred industry is a prime target because it is a regulated industry; the horses are micro-chipped and the details are kept in a database. It's easy to monitor racehorses, so vaccination can be forced upon the industry, while backyard horse owners, who are the ones most at risk, will escape the net.

While any death is tragic, only four people have died from Hendra Virus, the last of those being in 2009. But it is likely that this disease has undoubtedly been around for many years, much longer than when it was initially discovered in 1994. It is just that now, there is more awareness of the virus and this hysteria has ensued.

Hendra Virus is not unique to Queensland, the flying foxes that carry the disease inhabit all of Australia and there have been outbreaks of HeV in New South Wales, yet horse owners in other states aren't being threatened with mandatory vaccination.

This is an emotive issue, it is terrible that people have lost their lives and we definitely don't want to see more deaths, but if you take the emotion out of this argument, the fact is that four people have died in twenty two years.

Everyone associated with horses is aware of Hendra Virus and the simple measures of good hygiene and biosecurity practices that can be taken to prevent the contraction of the virus.

Wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) is a more cost-effective and sensible approach to the prevention of the disease, and this option doesn't have any adverse impact on a multi-million dollar economy that will be crippled by the excessive costs of mandatory vaccination, which the TBQA is concerned is purely a revenue-raising exercise for vets and Zoetis.

SUBMISSION POINTS

1. The development, trials and approval processes of the Hendra virus vaccine

It was only last November that the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA), deemed the vaccine to be safe in pregnant mares, including unborn foals.

The TBQA is concerned that the research period has not been a long enough period of time to ensure the ongoing health and well-being of those foals or any possible long-term or developmental issues that may arise as the horse matures, or how future conceptions in vaccinated mares may be affected, along with possible sterility in colts, or birth defects that the progeny of these vaccinate horses may inherit.

We are worried that forcing this vaccination onto breeders may affect the industry in the long-term, if any adverse side-effects appear in the future. The research has been approved

after a relatively short period, there hasn't been adequate time to see how it will affect herds in the long term - ten or twenty years down the track.

Look at the tragic situation that arose from thalidomide, which was introduced as a morning sickness drug for pregnant women in the 50's and was ultimately linked with numerous birth defects. There is currently a new lawsuit being investigated involving the morning sickness drug Zofran, and its link to birth defects.

There has not been enough testing over a long enough period of time to force mandatory vaccination on the breeding and racing industry.

The TBQA is also furious that horse owners are being discriminated against compared to dog owners. We have seen cases where dogs have contracted Hendra, we know that canines, like horses are carriers of the disease, and yet dog owners aren't being forced to vaccinate their pets.

Why are these demands not being placed on dogs?

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

Added to the expense of administering the vaccine, breeders are at real risk of losing a vital income source. Many countries won't import horses that have been vaccinated, therefore this vital international market will be shut-down for the Queensland industry.

International buyers invested an incredible \$53,014,500 in yearlings at our major Queensland sales over the past two years. How can we afford to rip this massive financial contribution from our economy?

At the recent March Magic Millions Yearling Sale, the leading buyer was from China, he spent just under \$700,000 on the purchase of 36 yearlings. Without his financial contribution and interest, the sale results would have been disastrous. The international buying bench at our sales is imperative for the market, and the Queensland economy as a whole.

**** China is an emerging market, you can clearly see from the graphs below how much their investment has grown in just twelve months and a strong partnership is currently being forged. This will be jeopardised if mandatory vaccination is introduced, as China is one of the countries that won't accept HeV vaccinated horses.

Below are some graphs that outline Queensland's major yearling sales over the past two years and clearly shows the important contribution that international buyers make to these sales.

March Magic Millions Sale 2016

<u>Location</u>	<u>Sold</u>	<u>Min</u>	<u>Max</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Gross</u>
QLD	210	5,000	180,000	30,495	6,404,000
NSW	36	5,000	65,000	20,819	749,500
CHINA	38	5,000	40,000	16,158	614,000
VIC	7	20,000	77,500	45,000	315,000
SINGAPORE	5	16,000	75,000	35,200	176,000
HONG KONG	2	27,000	70,000	48,500	97,000
NEW ZEALAND	3	16,000	60,000	32,000	96,000
WA	3	14,000	65,000	31,333	94,000
NT	1	13,500	13,500	13,500	13,500

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January Yearling Sale, 2016

<u>Location</u>	<u>Sold</u>	<u>Min</u>	<u>Max</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Gross</u>
NSW	275	1,000	1,600,000	175,362	48,224,500
VIC	185	15,000	1,000,000	144,981	26,821,500
QLD	184	3,500	500,000	89,943	16,549,500
HONG KONG	48	17,000	550,000	233,969	11,230,500
CHINA	35	3,500	800,000	261,457	9,151,000
NEW ZEALAND	35	35,000	1,100,000	158,000	5,530,000
UNITED KINGDOM	15	65,000	775,000	259,000	3,885,000
SA	21	25,000	460,000	142,262	2,987,500
SOUTH AFRICA	14	16,000	280,000	80,750	1,130,500
SINGAPORE	7	60,000	220,000	130,714	915,000
USA	3	110,000	470,000	300,000	900,000
WA	6	25,000	210,000	110,833	665,000
JAPAN	2	260,000	350,000	305,000	610,000
ACT	5	55,000	160,000	100,400	502,000
SOUTH KOREA	3	45,000	120,000	76,667	230,000
IRELAND	1	85,000	85,000	85,000	85,000
TAS	1	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000

National Yearling Sale, June 2015

<u>Location</u>	<u>Sold</u>	<u>Min</u>	<u>Max</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Gross</u>
QLD	98	1,000	340,000	24,881	2,438,300
VIC	67	1,500	200,000	35,784	2,397,500
NSW	69	1,500	260,000	30,681	2,117,000
NEW ZEALAND	21	10,000	155,000	47,905	1,006,000
SINGAPORE	19	7,500	170,000	45,789	870,000
HONG KONG	12	10,000	225,000	56,667	680,000
SOUTH AFRICA	12	3,000	200,000	33,875	406,500
WA	7	16,000	58,000	32,500	227,500
PHILIPPINES	11	2,500	28,000	13,909	153,000

<u>Location</u>	<u>Sold</u>	<u>Min</u>	<u>Max</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Gross</u>
SA	5	4,000	65,000	30,000	150,000
MACAU	2	25,000	100,000	62,500	125,000
TAS	6	1,500	16,000	6,833	41,000
LIBYA	1	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000
CHINA	1	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000

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March Yearling Sale, 2015

<u>Location</u>	<u>Sold</u>	<u>Min</u>	<u>Max</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Gross</u>
QLD	249	5,000	170,000	29,464	7,336,500
NSW	29	5,000	70,000	26,241	761,000
VIC	21	6,000	80,000	27,500	577,500
SA	2	12,000	50,000	31,000	62,000
NEW ZEALAND	1	42,500	42,500	42,500	42,500
PHILIPPINES	3	7,000	11,000	8,667	26,000
HONG KONG	1	17,000	17,000	17,000	17,000
SINGAPORE	1	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000

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Gold Coast Yearling Sale, January 2015

<u>Location</u>	<u>Sold</u>	<u>Min</u>	<u>Max</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Gross</u>
NSW	254	5,000	775,000	171,614	43,590,000
VIC	146	20,000	675,000	149,932	21,890,000
QLD	65	6,000	800,000	125,431	8,153,000
HONG KONG	24	50,000	1,050,000	256,354	6,152,500
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	6	200,000	1,200,000	588,333	3,530,000
SA	14	20,000	575,000	170,000	2,380,000
SINGAPORE	10	130,000	575,000	236,000	2,360,000
WA	16	35,000	320,000	115,312	1,845,000
NEW ZEALAND	6	25,000	360,000	220,833	1,325,000
SOUTH AFRICA	8	25,000	180,000	101,250	810,000
UNITED KINGDOM	3	50,000	350,000	160,000	480,000
IRELAND	1	280,000	280,000	280,000	280,000
JAPAN	1	80,000	80,000	80,000	80,000

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Mandatory Hendra Virus vaccination could also prevent many Queensland racehorses from competing on the international stage, because they may not be permitted to enter the country. This obviously has far-reaching detrimental effects on the racing industry as a whole, as it limits our promotion in other countries, and we are finally making ground in this arena after years of hard work and intense marketing.

Then there's the question of regulations on horses coming from interstate to compete in Queensland races, or other equestrian events. Will these horses also be required to be vaccinated against Hendra because they will be domiciled here for a few days or weeks? If this is the case, the Queensland racing industry will be decimated. No southern trainers will risk their valuable horses with vaccination to compete here.

A number of Queensland trainers have already experienced the adverse effects of administering the Hendra vaccine.

Liam Birchley has vaccinated two horses. He said one of them was exceptionally promising, he won his first start and broke a class record in the process, the other was a consistent winner/placegetter. After vaccination, neither performed to their potential again and they never even ran a place again. Mr Birchley adamantly believes the vaccine affected their ability to perform.

Another trainer, Kelso Wood, dominated every season, he had the best strike rate in Brisbane. Yet after he vaccinated his entire stable, his horses haven't won a race since. While there is no researched evidence to be able to prove that the Hendra vaccine is the cause of this anomaly, it is certainly an alarming coincidence.

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

While it is a horrendous virus, we need to put this into perspective. Seven Queenslanders have been infected with Hendra, four have died since 1994, twenty two years.

While any death is tragic, a mandatory vaccination campaign is a drastic over-reaction.

It's not only the vets that bear the risk of infection, anyone who goes near a horse can be infected. Yet horse owners and stud managers aren't calling for mandatory vaccination, in fact they are opposed to the concept.

The economic impact on stud farms is enormous. The cost to vaccinate is extremely prohibitive for many breeders. Horses need three vaccinations in the first twelve months, at a cost of between \$80 to \$120 per jab. That's anywhere from \$240 to \$360 per year - times that by 600 horses that some of the larger studs accommodate, and some breeders could be paying almost \$220,000 every year to vaccinate their herd.

Mandatory vaccination will put many studs, large and small out of business, because it's hundreds of thousands of dollars strain on their annual income, and studs don't have that margin to play with, so it could be disastrous.

It is the vets and Zoetis, the manufacturing company, that profit from this campaign, especially when they are forcing horse owners to vaccinate. Under the current legislation, the vets have to administer the drug, therefore there's call-out fees along with 'labour' charges, added to the cost of the vaccine.

It's fine for vets to want horse owners to vaccinate, but owners are not allowed to give the injection themselves, and vets are charging a fortune to administer it. They want to be protected, but they are still charging fees that many breeders just can't afford.

If vets are so concerned about their welfare, and this is not a money-making exercise for them, then maybe the vets should start offering to vaccinate for free?

The TBQA also believes that vaccination is a 'simple solution' to the problem for vets. At a symposium convened by Racing Queensland in December, TBQA President, Basil Nolan was astounded to hear some vets say that the vaccine should be compulsory so that they don't have to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) because it's too hot!

If they have an attitude like that, how worried about their health and safety are they?

The entire process is more about financial gain than workplace safety, as both the drug manufacturing company, Zoetis, and the vets, make a considerable profit from the administration of the vaccine.

Zoetis is the sole manufacturer of the vaccine in Australia, therefore can command any price they want, without competition to keep prices realistic.

The company also has a very limited clientele for HeV, being virtually Queensland only, so they need a good take-up here to make their profits.

When there was a poor take-up of the vaccine initially, Zoetis suddenly removed the initial costs of HeV in a bid to encourage more vaccinations. How could they afford to do this unless the product was marked-up substantially to begin with?

And will they decide to further reduce the cost of the vaccine so that more people will administer it, or increase the costs if the vaccination is made mandatory and breeders have no choice but to administer it? If so, questions need to be asked about the true cost of the drug and where the profits are going.

This is the same company that can't supply the Herpes Virus Vaccine to Australia for at least eighteen months, and now Australian horses are at high risk of aborting because we have no access to this important vaccine, which is given to prevent the spread of EHV-1, a disease which leads to abortion in mares.

It's also extremely unfair that the racing and breeding industry will be forced into this costly campaign, when backyard horse owners will remain unregulated – and these are the people who are most at risk and where we have seen past outbreaks occur.

Personal Protective Equipment has proved to be an adequate safeguard against Hendra Virus, and is a much more cost-effective option for everyone involved. There has been no deaths from Hendra Virus since PPE was enforced in 2009.

Doctors treat humans with highly contagious diseases, eg Ebola, HIV etc, and yet they rely solely on PPE for their protection. There would be more chance of them contracting those diseases than a vet getting Hendra.

The Queensland Government introduced a Personal Protective Equipment Rebate Program for Queensland Veterinary Surgeons four years ago. Queensland Veterinary practices can

apply for a Start-up Rebate for Personal Protective Equipment and, after submitting a sample for Hendra Virus testing, a Replenishment Rebate is also available.

They can be reimbursed for the use of PPE and taking these precautions, but horse owners can't be reimbursed for vaccination, which is substantially more expensive.

4. whether the procedures required for veterinarians attending horses that are not vaccinated against the Hendra virus are proportionate to the consequences;

As mentioned earlier, the TBQA believes there has been a drastic over-reaction to Hendra Virus. Seven people have been infected with Hendra, four have died in the past twenty two years.

It is an emotive issue, and unfortunately, as a result, an unrealistic picture has been painted about a virus that has probably been around for decades, and while any related death is tragic, there has not been enough contamination to warrant the hysteria that's ensued.

There are plenty of other diseases that are much more serious and claim hundreds of lives every year, and yet they do not create the hysteria that HeV has. As mentioned previously, doctors treat humans with diseases that are much more contagious and wide-spread than HeV, but have no more than PPE.

It's not only the vets that bear the risk of infection, anyone who goes near a horse can be infected. Yet horse owners, trainers and stud managers aren't calling for mandatory vaccination, in fact they are opposed to the concept.

Mandatory vaccination is an over-reaction, the above statistics prove that HeV is not something that can be easily caught or transmitted, and if vets and horse owners take the proper precautions, by simply wearing PPE - this negates the risk.

PPE is a simple and more cost effective option and does not impact on the finances of an already struggling industry, nor the possibility of exporting horses overseas. These measures are clearly effective, as no one has died from Hendra since 2009. It was after that tragic death that these hygiene and biosecurity measures were enforced, and they have obviously been successful – without mandatory vaccination.

The vaccine costs are exorbitant, and because regulation states it has to be administered by a vet, you have those additional call out and treatment fees. Thoroughbred Studs both large and small will be crippled by these costs.

Not only will studs be hit hard financially, but they stand to lose thousands of dollars in export sales, as some countries won't import horses who have been vaccinated for Hendra Virus. And breeders are concerned that the effect on broodmares and foals has not been adequately researched.

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

Some vets are already refusing to treat horses that aren't vaccinated against HeV, even if they aren't showing symptoms of the virus.

The TBQA believes it's irresponsible of vets to be telling a client that they can't attend the animal just because it hasn't been vaccinated. Some of these horses are worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, and may have no symptoms of Hendra Virus whatsoever (eg a leg injury, colic etc)

Horse owners are now well aware of HeV symptoms, and they would not put themselves or their staff at risk, let alone a vet or anyone else.

As mentioned earlier, it is extremely costly to vaccinate a horse - anywhere from \$240 to \$360 per year - times that by 600 horses that some of the larger studs accommodate, and some breeders could be paying almost \$220,000 every year to vaccinate their herd.

It is the vets and Zoetis, the manufacturing company, that profit from this campaign and the horse owners that are suffering.

Horse owners are being discriminated against if they choose not to take the risk and expense of vaccination. Equine vets aren't common, and it's not as simple as just 'finding another one' if your vet won't attend – there may not be another one in the area.

Therefore, the lives of valuable animals, not to mention the livelihood of businesses, are being put at risk when vets refuse to attend an animal. Horses worth thousands of dollars may have to be put down unnecessarily because vets refuse to treat them – and yet all the vet has to do is wear PPE – and if the horse is showing symptoms of Hendra, they don't have to treat it.

Last December, three vets were charged by Workplace Health and Safety for not carrying out correct procedures when treating the disease. The TBQA thinks this is an over-reaction by WHS and there needs to be more discussion about sensible practices and when common sense should prevail, vets would not put their lives at risk. This action has unfortunately scared many vets into not treating unvaccinated horses at all. What it should have done, was encourage all vets to follow procedures, wear PPE and ensure personal hygiene and biosecurity practices are followed.

ANOTHER ALTERNATIVE – CULL THE BATS

We can consider the pros and cons of mandatory vaccination and PPE and the risks associated with attending non-vaccinated horses, but there is one important aspect related to Hendra Virus that has been completely overlooked – the hosts – the flying fox population.

Perhaps it's time the State Government considered implementing a program to cull the bats.

There have actually been deaths associated with two fatal bat-borne diseases - Hendra Virus and Lyssavirus. When will enough be enough?

Something must be done to manage the bat populations before more people are unnecessarily killed. We see constant reports about communities plagued by bat populations

and residents being kept 'prisoners in their homes' because they are fearful of the diseases these creatures spread. Yet State Government legislation prevents their removal.

The TBQA doesn't want the bats wiped out, but they do need to be managed more adequately. Bats are a pest and are dangerous and it's time action was taken. I'm sure every Local Government would agree - we should start at the root of the problem and reduce bat populations.

IN CONCLUSION

The TBQA is strongly opposed to any mandatory vaccination of Hendra Virus, or forced vaccination by vets who refuse to treat non-vaccinated horses.

This has become an emotive issue, due to the deaths of four people in the past twenty two years. Yet no one has died since 2009 due to the awareness of the virus and preventive biosecurity measures that have proved successful – without mandatory vaccination in place.

The livelihood of the breeding and racing industry is at stake; the economic impact is severe and will place an industry that is already under immense strain into crisis, we will lose tens of millions of dollars every year.

Vaccination also places the lucrative equine export industry in jeopardy, along with any potential for our horses to compete on the international stage.

Hendra virus is not unique to Queensland, yet other states are not being forced to vaccinate.

If the solution to this problem is as simple, and inexpensive, as vets and horse handlers wearing personal protective equipment, surely this is the most sensible outcome. If vets are truly this concerned about their welfare, rather than the financial gain that mandatory vaccination will bring to them, then they would be happy to comply.

Yours faithfully,



Basil Nolan
TBQA President