



Speech by
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EQUINE INFLUENZA

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (12.15 pm): As equine influenza continues its non-stop march through the southern half of the red zone, today I want to speak about the importance of getting all pleasure and performance horses in the red zone vaccinated, about the sheer human cost that has occurred so far to people involved in the horse industry, about the confusion that exists as to who is paying for vaccinations now and in the future and, importantly, I want to talk about trying to get people's lives back to some degree of normality after months of equine influenza.

People involved in the horse industry love their horses. For those people who have had to see their horses suffer from EI, it has been a dreadful thing that has happened to their families, to their businesses and in particular to the animals that they love. There are big issues regarding animal welfare in the whole EI issue. Seeing an old mare standing in the corner close to foaling with flies all over her flank driving her mad from the discharge from her nose with a barking hacking cough and a high temperature in the summer heat is really very distressing to people who have seen this happen time and time again. Almost 2,000 properties have been officially declared infected at the moment, and that is only a part of the equation because I do know that many people are not actually formally advising the DPI of their infection.

On 14 September I called for vaccination, because I spoke to a lot of major veterinary practices and I was of the clear opinion that the only way this would be stopped within the buffer zones was with vaccination. Fortunately that has occurred, but it occurred too late. The situation now is that the thoroughbred and standardbred industries have been vaccinated—that is, racehorses, spellers and broodmares or breeding stock—and most of the major buffer zone has been done. Other buffer zones are being put in place and vaccinations are occurring, and I support the DPI in the work that it is doing in those particular zones. But unless vaccination of the other 80 per cent of horses takes place, we will not contain and eradicate this debilitating illness.

Today I want an absolute commitment from the government to vaccinate all of those horses. People have worked so hard to keep their places free of the virus. In some cases they have been successful; in other cases no matter what they did they still got it, because as it moves forward on the wind with the flies and with people going to produce stores and to work it is just going from place to place. First of all, we must have enough vaccine. I understand that the pleasure and performance horse industry committee that has been put in place has been able to secure enough vaccine for 26,000 horses. However, it does not know just yet when that vaccine will come in. It is important that it gets it as soon as it can, because every day 100 or more properties are infected and many more horses are being infected and going through this terrible illness.

There is great confusion about who pays. Currently, vaccination for all of the thoroughbreds and standardbreds is being paid for by the contribution being made by the racing industry—that is, from the many millions it has saved from cancelled races and cut prize money. From those funds it will take a contribution to pay for the cost of the vaccinations. What is going to happen to the pleasure and performance horse industry? Who is going to pay there? The DPI is paying for all of the vaccinations in the buffer zones. Some people are just outside the buffer zones. What is going to happen to them? What about the farriers and the horse dentists? Who should have priority? Most of them have horses, but they cannot

work because they cannot get around from place to place because of all of the disinfection that they have to undergo and that has devastated their income. There are so many issues involved here and the government needs to come out with a very clear-cut policy of who is going to pay.

It costs about \$100 for every vaccination, with the first lot costing people \$300. The DPI&F has been telling people that they are going to have to pay the \$300 if they do not live in the buffer zone or they do not own thoroughbreds or standardbreds. That is completely unfair. These people have worked hard. It was not their fault there was an outbreak of horse flu. They have worked hard to keep horse flu away. They have undertaken all the controls that they could, but now they are faced with this dilemma. For those people who have a number of horses, this is going to cost them thousands and thousands of dollars.

Horse flu must be eradicated. It can only be eradicated if all the pleasure and performance horses in the red zone are vaccinated so that it dies out. If that is not done, horse flu will be present forever. It will become endemic. I know that for a fact because I have talked to the most experienced vets, who have told me that that will be the case.

Horses must be vaccinated against horse flu. There must be funds allocated to pay for the vaccination. Then finally people will be able to get back to their lives. At the moment people are lost—they are frustrated, their health is suffering and their businesses are suffering because their lives have been ripped apart by this terrible illness.