



Speech by

Hon. Tim Mulherin

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Hansard Tuesday, 18 August 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Hendra Virus

Hon. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland) (10.38 am): I want to update the House on the latest incidence of Hendra virus. At the outset I acknowledge the stress faced by Mr John Brady and others who have possibly been exposed to Hendra virus and now face an anxious wait. My thoughts go out to them. I also recognise the team of more than 40 officers from Biosecurity Queensland who have been working long hours to deal with this case. They are doing an excellent job and I congratulate each and every officer on their efforts. The response was activated on Saturday, 8 August at 10.32 am with two phone calls to our hotline. By midday we had a veterinary officer on the property and it and a neighbouring property were placed in quarantine as a precaution the same day.

Hendra virus has been confirmed in the horse that died on 8 August and another horse that died the day before. The first round of results from all 25 horses on the quarantined property are clear for Hendra virus. This includes tests for Hendra virus antibodies that we have been waiting on and were only received late last night. The horse that showed a positive test result last week and was subsequently retested is included in this initial round of results. However, this horse still remains suspect and will be subject to further testing. Eleven horses that left the affected property before the quarantine have been traced and tested. The results for nine of those horses are negative, one is undergoing further testing and we are awaiting advice on the results from the final horse that was traced to New South Wales. I stress that a further testing of all 36 horses will be required over the next few weeks because the antibodies that demonstrate previous exposure to Hendra virus take time to develop and be measured by a diagnostic test.

Biosecurity Queensland has engaged Dr Nigel Perkins to audit procedures being used as part of the response. This kind of independent evaluation was one of the recommendations from the Perkins review and is a proactive way to make sure that there is continuous improvement of our Hendra responses. But I repeat that, in my view, our officers have been doing a great job. This is only the 12th incident of Hendra recorded since the virus was first discovered in 1994. As we learn more about the virus, our response and procedures will continue to evolve.