



Speech by


Hon. Campbell Newman

MEMBER FOR ASHGROVE

Hansard Wednesday, 30 May 2012

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Hendra Virus

 **Hon. CKT NEWMAN** (Ashgrove—LNP) (Premier) (2.06 pm): I rise to advise the House of two confirmed cases of Hendra virus: one where a horse has died on a property at Cawarral, east of Rockhampton; the other where a horse has died on a property near Ingham. Specialist Hendra virus officers from Biosecurity Queensland have been deployed from Rockhampton and Townsville to quarantine both properties. The officers will work closely with the owners, neighbours and the vets who first attended the horses. Government health officers will also be talking to the owners and the vets about precautions that need to be taken.

The two outbreaks highlight the need for all horse owners and vets to be absolutely vigilant this winter, which is the high-risk season for the Hendra virus. While vigilance is called for, we need to remain calm and focused on effective quarantine to control and minimise all outbreaks and potential outbreaks. In the first instance, this of course means horse owners must make sure their animals are not stabled or left in yards and smaller paddocks where trees that are fruiting are prone to visits by bats. Any horses that appear ill and show nervousness or flu-like symptoms should not be handled unless under veterinarian supervision and using proper personal protective equipment, including overalls, gloves and masks. The supply of PPE kits will be subsidised by my government with \$1 million being provided as part of the LNP's election commitment. Vets will be able to submit receipts for Hendra virus PPE kits purchased from 24 March 2012. Applications will be processed and a refund of up to \$250 will be provided. Full details of the program and how veterinarians can apply for the rebate will be released shortly.

I am informed that since taking on the role, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Minister John McVeigh, has inspected the department's vet labs at Coopers Plains in Brisbane where the confirmation tests for Hendra are carried out and also the vet labs at Toowoomba and Townsville. Minister McVeigh is monitoring the situation very closely, mindful of the damning findings of the Ombudsman's investigation into the previous government's handling of Hendra.

My government is committed to working closely with horse and property owners, with local vets, local communities and councils to ensure that risks to horses and other domestic animals, but particularly to human lives, is reduced as much as possible. I have instructed Minister McVeigh to work with all those affected by this and previous outbreaks, particularly at Rockhampton where local vet Dr Alister Rodgers became infected while treating horses at the J4S Equine Nursery at Cawarral and tragically died from Hendra in 2009. If any individual is assessed as having a moderate or high level of exposure, their situation will be reviewed by an infectious diseases and public health expert panel to determine appropriate management. This might include the offer of monoclonal antibodies. While horse owners and vets await the commercial release of the Hendra vaccine, being developed by the CSIRO with support from the Queensland government and scheduled for next year, I urge everyone not to take any unnecessary risks.