

QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 2006
Asked on Thursday, 4 December 2008

MR HOPPER asked the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries (MR MULHERIN)-

QUESTION:

With reference to the answer to Question on Notice No. 1239 of 2008 that stated that the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries has a very effective notification system—

- (1) Will he detail the notification system for cases of Hendra virus?
- (2) Will he advise (a) the date on which veterinarians were informed of the latest cases of Hendra virus, (b) how many veterinarians were contacted and whether this was done through a Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries contact list or through an organisation such as the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Queensland or the Australian Veterinary Association?

ANSWER:

- (1) Queensland has in place a system of notification for diseases under the *Stock Act 1915* (the Act). Section 27 of the Act requires notification of certain diseases, known as notifiable diseases which are prescribed under the *Stock Regulation 1988*. Hendra virus infection is a notifiable disease under Schedule 6 of the Regulation.

The Act places specific responsibilities on veterinarians in respect of notifiable diseases, specifically that where a veterinarian diagnoses, or has reason to suspect the existence of, a notifiable disease, they shall give notice to the nearest government veterinary officer within 24 hours.

- (2) The report on the independent review of Hendra virus cases at Redlands and Proserpine in July and August 2008 undertaken by Dr Nigel Perkins of AusVet Animal Health Services was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 4 December 2008. The report found that DPI&F's response to the incidents was managed appropriately, consistent with the nationally approved response plans and DPI&F's published procedures. In particular, Dr Perkins found that the responses were rapid and effective, and successful in that the disease was contained.

Dr Perkins thoroughly reviewed all aspects of the response, including the notification processes used. These are fully detailed in the report, but in summary, found that the notification systems used to notify peak industry and professional organisations, including the Australian Veterinary Association and Equine Veterinarians Australia, were prompt and appropriate.

DPI&F will continue to consider all 20 recommendations from Dr Perkins' report, and has committed to reporting back with a response to the recommendations by mid 2009.

Dr Perkins' report is a strong endorsement for the work undertaken by the very dedicated and skilled staff in DPI&F who responded to these incidents, and I acknowledge their efforts in the successful management of these recent events.