

QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 310
Asked on 1 May 2013

MR HOLSWICH asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (MR McVEIGH)–

QUESTION:

What steps can horse owners in the Pine Rivers Electorate take to better protect their horses from Hendra virus?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Pine Rivers for his question.

I am pleased to announce that a Hendra virus vaccine is now available for horses.

The vaccine, which was launched in November last year, has been shown to be very effective in protecting horses against Hendra virus infection. Given that human infection has occurred following high-level exposure to body fluids from an infected horse, vaccinating horses is an important preventative measure and provides a public health and workplace health and safety benefit.

Recent work has also meant that 6 months duration of immunity conferred by the vaccine has been confirmed and also a more flexible initial vaccination regime permitted. This is good news for horse owners and veterinarians.

However it is important horse owners do not become complacent after horses have been vaccinated. People working closely with horses should always practise good hygiene and biosecurity measures when working with horses, regardless of their vaccination status.

Horse owners should discuss vaccination of their horses with their veterinarian.

Other ways to reduce the risk of Hendra virus infection in horses are to minimise contact horses may have with flying fox body fluids and excretions. This can be done by removing horse feed and water containers from under trees and if possible placing them under shelter and removing horses from paddocks where flowering or fruiting trees are attracting flying foxes.

Horse owners should make sure they isolate sick horses from other horses, other animals and people until a veterinarian's opinion has been obtained.

Biosecurity Queensland has recently updated the Hendra virus fact sheet which is located on the website www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au, where all of this information plus more about Hendra virus can be found.