



Agriculture and Environment Committee

Chair: Glenn Butcher MP
Deputy Chair: Tony Perrett MP

Media Release

Issued: 21 October 2016

Committee recommends against mandatory Hendra vaccinations

Vaccinating horses against the deadly Hendra virus should not be mandatory, a parliamentary inquiry has found.

The Queensland Parliament's Agriculture and Environment Committee made eleven recommendations from its eight-month inquiry into the Hendra virus vaccine and its use by veterinarians. They include changes to workplace safety laws to limit the liability of veterinarians when treating horses that may have the virus.

Committee Chair and MP for Gladstone, Glenn Butcher, says the inquiry recommendations are about saving lives.

"Hendra virus remains a risk for horses wherever there are flying foxes. Horses that get infected generally die. If people get the virus from infected horses they will likely die too, and there is no cure."

"Vaccinating against the Hendra virus remains the most effective option for preventing horse and human deaths from the virus, according to biosecurity, workplace safety and health experts."

"If people stop vaccinating their horses, we will see deaths from Hendra virus in Queensland again."

Seventy-seven horses and four people have already died from the virus since 1994.

The committee has also supported the rights of veterinarians to refuse to treat unvaccinated horses.

The committee's other recommendations include:

- The revision of biosecurity guidelines for veterinarians to clarify requirements to wear personal protective equipment for low risk and high risk treatments of horses
- A feasibility study to examine whether exclusion testing for the virus can be performed in North Queensland as well as in Brisbane to give quicker test results for North Queensland samples
- Support from the government for the development of a rapid stall-side test for the virus
- Temperature indicators on the vaccine's packaging to show whether it has been stored correctly
- Reminding vets of their obligation to provide horse owners information about the vaccine and risks of adverse reactions
- More reporting of adverse vaccine reactions by horse owners to the regulatory body, the Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority, and
- A campaign by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries to promote vaccination against Hendra virus.

The committee also recommended the inclusion of equine industry representatives in future meetings of the Hendra Virus Interagency Technical Working Group that provides technical advice to the government.

The Queensland Government has three months to respond to the committee's recommendations.

For media comment: please contact the committee Chair, Glenn Butcher MP on 4904 1100
For further information: please contact the secretariat in Brisbane on 3553 6662 or aec@parliament.qld.gov.au. The written submissions and other information for the inquiry are available from the Parliament's website [here](#).