



Position Statement

Hendra Vaccinations for RDA horses.

15 August 2018

The Board and Management of RDA Australia recognise advice from Equine Veterinarians Australia (EVA) that Hendra virus is a deadly zoonotic (cross-species) disease. The virus is transmitted from flying fox populations to a horse, after which it may spread via horse to horse, or horse to human, transmission. The mortality (death) rate in horses is 100% and 60% in humans.

The EVA recommends a safe, effective and accessible vaccine for horses in Hendra-prone areas (particularly Queensland and New South Wales). RDA Australia supports this recommendation.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Notice of outbreaks - RDA Australia and its State Member Associations will monitor warnings from the Department of Primary Industries regarding outbreaks and infection prone areas. State Member Associations will implement immediate biosecurity protocols at affected RDA Centres as dictated by Department of Primary Industries and/or the attending veterinarian.

Equestrian Events - Equestrian events carry an increased risk for the transmission of Hendra virus. Gathering of a large number of horses from different locations in an intensive space increases the likelihood of disease transmission between horses. A certificate of Hendra vaccination will be required for all horses attending the RDA National Championships from Queensland and New South Wales (other infection prone areas may be included on advice from EVA or DPI). The Organising Committee of the RDA National Championship will include standard biosecurity protocols for horses during the planning process (record of horse movements, biosecurity kits, and separate spectator areas from horse areas). All State Organising Committees for local and state competitions will likewise consider appropriate biosecurity controls for any event where horses from different locations are gathered.

RDA AUSTRALIA POSITION ON VACCINATION

RDA Australia strongly recommends that horses in infection prone areas are vaccinated by a registered veterinarian. RDA Australia recognise that vaccination of RDA horses adds a substantial cost to the operating expenditure of an RDA Centre, and therefore, currently recommends vaccination only for those RDA Centres with horses in high risk, Hendra prone areas. State RDA Member Associations should identify high risk Centres, working with them to ensure sufficient funding is available for horses to be vaccinated and to have an action plan in place to manage potential risks.

For more information about the Hendra Vaccine visit:

<https://www.ava.com.au/sites/default/files/EVA%20website/ResourcesDownloads/The%20Hendra%20Vaccine%20-%20Your%20Questions%20Answered.pdf>

The EVA recommends vaccination for horses at risk of Hendra as the single most effective way of preventing the disease. Vaccination protects both the individual horse against Hendra virus infection, as well as protecting humans in contact with the horse (volunteers, riders, family). It also allows veterinarians to treat sick horses immediately – unvaccinated horses exhibiting Hendra-like symptoms may require testing before treatment is initiated. As an example, this can leave a horse with colic, undiagnosed and untreated while awaiting Hendra testing results, placing the animal in a life-threatening situation.

An outbreak of the Hendra virus connected to RDA will have a significant impact on our volunteers, riders and public image. RDA Australia strongly recommends that horses in infection prone areas are vaccinated.

Karen Aspery, National Executive Officer, RDA Australia

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