



PRESS RELEASE

El Vaccination – What a Waste

Australian Horse Industry Council (AHIC) President, Dr Roger Lavelle, today said that any decision by the Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC) to allow for voluntary vaccination of horses against Equine Influenza would conflict with the views of the vast majority of the equine industry.

Dr Lavelle called on Primary Industry Ministers to listen and heed the concerns of the broad horse industry, “The clear majority of horse breeders and owners in Australia vigorously oppose voluntary vaccination as they recognise it can only hurt Australia’s horse industry if it was allowed. It is amazing to think that the weight of scientific and veterinary opinion which universally warns that vaccination will mask the presence of EI in infected animals and facilitate the silent spread of disease, could be ignored – yet, this is exactly what a minority sector of the horse industry has asked PIMC to consider”.

“Any decision to allow for vaccination would spell the end of Australia’s reputation as being a country relatively free of disease. It would be an admission of failure that the equine industry and Government authorities haven’t been able to contain and remove EI from Australia. That is plainly wrong,” he said.

Allowing for voluntary vaccination will mean that infected animals will be able to transmit the disease to non-vaccinated animals. The reality of this is that EI will spread over time throughout the country. That will only hurt Australia’s horse industry, from mum’s and dad’s with their weekend ponies right through to the horse racing industry itself as mounting a response would be futile.

Dr Lavelle also said that voluntary vaccination would make a mockery of Australia’s quarantine system, “Australia spent \$100 million in response to the Equine Influenza outbreak in 2007 and a further \$280 million in financial assistance for the horse industry. Allowing for voluntary vaccination now would make that a massive waste of taxpayer money, not to mention the costs associated with two inquiries and a number of independent reports. Exporters of horses to New Zealand will also be slugged with a hefty quarantine bill and 5-week wait in quarantine when current movement, other than transportation, is free.

The AHIC is united in its belief that the most effective response to any future Equine Influenza outbreak remains comprehensive and effective risk mitigation via strong quarantine protocols rather than a costly and unnecessary vaccination program which will make the costs of eradication last time look minor”. In the 33 months since the first outbreak of EI in Australia, enhanced quarantine controls arising from

the Callinan Inquiry's recommendations have meant that there have been no further EI outbreaks in Australia

"PIMC should reject calls for vaccination and ensure the enhanced quarantine protocols are maintained and support the progress being made toward signing EADRA, before making a decision that could potentially compromise Australia's horse industry," he said.

The Australian Horse Industry Council is the national representative body serving the Australian horse industry.

Ends

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