



Hendra Working Group

Recommendations to the EA National Board

December 2015

1. Background

Equestrian Australia Hendra By-Law

On 1 July 2014 EA introduced a Hendra Vaccination By-Law for the whole of the sport. The policy required organising committees of FEI and EA events to complete a questionnaire during their initial planning stages to determine if condition of entry vaccination would be a requirement at their event. The aim of the By Law is to mitigate the risk of Hendra disease in higher risk horses, at higher risk events and in higher risk regions.

The By-Law was due to come into effect on 1 October 2014, however the EA Board made the decision to delay the policy's implementation date to allow for the consideration of further scientific advice and feedback received from members and event organisers.

The Hendra Working Group was assembled in November 2014 as part of a review ordered by the EA board.

The Advisory Panel, consisting of veterinary and science experts as well as experienced event organisers were requested to review the By-Law and checklist as well as consider the concerns that had been raised by EA members in relation to vaccine safety/adverse events, duration of immunity, vaccine registration and risk assessment.

The panel consists of the following individuals:

- Vicki Burgess – Secretary, Eventing NSW; Event Organiser.
- Professor James Gikerson – Professor of Veterinary Microbiology and Director of the Centre for Equine Infectious Disease at the University of Melbourne.
- Sue McDermott – Chairman, Equestrian Tasmania; NCAS Coach.
- Dr Deborah Middleton – Research Team Leader and Senior Veterinary Pathologist at the CSIRO. Dr Middleton leads projects within the Animal Biosecurity research area at the CSIRO Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL).
- Dr Cameron Osborne – Sports and Exercise Medicine Physician; President, Queensland International Three Day Event.

2. Methodology

Member and stakeholder contribution

Concurrently to the formation of the Hendra Review Panel the EA board invited member and stakeholder feedback on EA's Hendra By-Law. Feedback could be submitted via the equestrian.org.au website. The period within which individuals could submit their feedback was 21 November 2014 – 19 December 2014.

More than 100 submissions were received from members and clubs with the following topics identified as being the most popular amongst respondents:

- Adverse reactions to the vaccine (to date)
- Duration of immunity
- Cost of the vaccine
- Other stakeholder/industry policies

Panel research

Prior to joining the panel each member was required to declare his/her conflict of interest as well as sign a confidentiality agreement. No conflicts were registered by the panel.

The panel met on six occasions (see section 3 – timelines for meeting details) via teleconference to work through the terms of reference which the board tasked the panel with.

Terms of Reference

1. Complete a full assessment on the risk that the Hendra virus creates for EA events nationally
2. Assess the concerns that have been raised around the vaccine's safety/adverse events, duration of immunity and vaccine registration
3. Research the response by other industry groups to the Hendra vaccine
4. Review of the revoked EA Hendra Vaccination By-Law and Equestrian Competition Hendra Biosecurity Checklist
5. Present the Equestrian Australia national board with policy recommendations for the most effective way of mitigating the risk of Hendra incident occurring at an EA event, with full consideration given to reference items 1-4.

3. Timelines

1 July 2014	EA announces Hendra By-Law
2 September 2014	EA suspends Hendra By-Law
19 November 2014	EA board announced Hendra Advisory Panel and member feedback period opens
23 January 2015	First meeting of the Hendra Panel (teleconference)
2 February 2015	EA revokes Hendra By-Law effective immediately
11 March 2015	Second meeting of the Hendra Panel (teleconference)
19 April 2015	Special General Meeting is held to discuss and vote on motions related to Hendra and put forward by NSW and QLD
20 May 2015	Third meeting of the Hendra Panel (teleconference)
1 July 2015	Fourth meeting of the Hendra Panel (teleconference)
30 July 2015	EA lodges notice with ACCC
2 September 2015	Fifth meeting of the Hendra Panel (teleconference)
2 December 2015	Final meeting of the Hendra Panel (teleconference)
8 December 2015	EA Board presented with Panel's final recommendations

4. Research

Prior to its first meeting the Panel was provided with background information and available data. This information was intended to be thought provoking and give the panel the necessary background information to begin their review.

EA material:

1. [EA Hendra By-Law Effective 1 July 2014](#)
2. [Equestrian Competition Hendra Biosecurity Checklist](#)
3. [EA Hendra FAQs Event Organisers](#)

4. [EA Hendra FAQs General](#)
5. [EA Hendra FAQs Riders/Owners](#)

Additional available advice regarding Hendra and passed onto members of the panel for their review:

6. [AERA Hendra Management Report](#)
7. [Discussion Paper – Human Hendra Virus Encephalitis Associated with Equine Outbreak](#)
8. [Discussion paper – Recrudescence Infection Supports Hendra Virus Persistence in Australian Flying Fox populations](#)
9. [EVA Hendra Virus FAQs](#)
10. [NSW Work Safe – Hendra virus risk workers](#)
11. [Qld Govt – Hendra Virus Infection Prevention Advice](#)
12. [Qld Govt – Alert Hendra Virus Horse information for proprietors and business owners](#)
13. [Qld Govt – Alert Hendra Virus information for vets](#)
14. [Qld Govt – Guidelines for vets handling potential Hendra virus infection](#)
15. [Qld Govt – guide to work health and safety act 2011](#)
16. [Qld Govt – Hendra virus info pack for horse owners](#)
17. [Qld Govt – horse riding code of practice for horse riding schools](#)
18. [Qld Govt – Hendra virus and horse owners – Risk perception and management](#)

Throughout its initial meetings the panel allocated roles and responsibilities amongst themselves, with each taking on a separate area of research and reporting back to the panel at subsequent meetings.

Roles and responsibilities were allocated as follows:

Terms of Reference	Roles & Responsibilities	Appendix
1. <i>Complete a full assessment on the risk that the Hendra virus creates for EA event organisers and participants.</i>	VB and CO completed an assessment from an event organisers perspective	Item 1, (examples 1a, 1b, 1c)
	SM agreed to consider from the point of view from the participants	Item 2
	As part of this the procedures for dealing with a Hendra Incident and who would be responsible were also researched	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State departments of primary industry were contacted (JG) • Chief Veterinary Officer in each state to ascertain the emergency disease legislation (JG) • Workplace Health & Safety in NSW/Qld (EA) • At a subsequent meeting the panel requested information from Biosecurity Qld regarding the management of vaccinated 	Item 3 Item 3 Item 4

	horses at an event if Hendra infection was confirmed.	
2. <i>Assess the concerns that have been raised around the vaccine's safety/adverse events, duration of immunity and vaccine registration</i>	JG and DM would look into this item with JG to source data from AVPMA and Zoetis regarding adverse events.	Items 3; 5; 5a; 5b; 5c
3. <i>Research the response by other industry groups to the Hendra vaccine</i>	SM and CO researched the positions of other equine groups, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Horse Industry Council • Pony Club Australia (PCA) – a copy of the Biosecurity Plan for the Pony Club Australian National Championships was provided. As to a future policy, PCA advised that it is looking to EA. • Racing (NSW and Qld) – currently neither organisation has a policy in place. Racing Qld encourages vaccination and a subsidised scheme for vaccination when the vaccine became available resulted in a very good take up initially. 	Item 6, 7
4. <i>Review of the revoked EA Hendra Vaccination By-Law and Equestrian Competition Hendra Biosecurity Checklist</i>	The panel discussed the By-Law and Checklist at its meetings.	

SM – Sue McDermott; CO – Cameron Osborne; VB – Vicki Burgess; JG – James Gilkerson (JG); DM – Deborah Middleton; EA – EA staff

5. Panel Recommendations

The panel recommends to the EA board:

Changing EA's general regulations to require events to consider biosecurity when carrying out a risk assessment

Currently Article 109 of the EA General Regulations states:

OC's of all EA events must have a risk management plan and ensure that safety precautions are taken.

The panel was unanimous that the general regulations should be updated to state that all event organisers are required to have a risk management plan as well as a biosecurity risk assessment.

Forming a group to prepare a risk assessment tool to assist event organisers comply with EA General Regulations

Should the initial recommendation be accepted by the board then it is obvious that event organisers are going to require assistance in adhering to this. The panel recommends that a working group be established to develop a risk assessment tool that covers off all risks including all biosecurity risks.

While the panel supports a compulsory biosecurity risk assessment being completed it should not be a requirement the EA risk assessment tool is used as some venue owners will already require events to complete this. The tool is therefore considered a resource for event organisers who do not have access to a biosecurity risk assessment.

The panel agreed the working group established to develop the template should consist of the following representatives. The panel supported having people who would be the ones using the document rather than a paid professional as this would only lead to similar documents which are available (as an example the Animal Health Australia biosecurity tool).

- Vet(s)
- Event organiser(s)
- Venue/lease holder(s)
- Competitor(s)
- Official(s)
- AHA – in an advisory capacity
- One representative from each discipline

Further, the panel recommends a wide reaching consultation once the risk assessment has been developed, particularly with event organisers in NSW and Qld.

The panel recommended that the template be reviewed on an annual basis.

Defining the known Hendra area as acknowledgement that location is important when considering risk

The panel supported the Equine Veterinary Association's (EVA) definition of the known Hendra area being restricted to the following location:

QLD: the entire QLD east coast and the area contained within a line 200km due east of the coast. In addition, the 200 km line bulges out in an arc at Noosa, to go as far east as 20 km east of Chinchilla. NSW. The north coast of NSW to as far south as 50 km south of Kempsey, and the area contained within a line 200km due east of the coast.

Definition of a vaccinated horse

At this time there is no agreed definition of a vaccinated horse. The Australian Veterinary Association is in consultation with the EA Hendra Working Group to arrive at the definition of a vaccinated horse. The EA Hendra Working Group acknowledge that it has been formed to consider the best interest of EA members and what is in the best interests of EA members may be different to the agenda of the APVMA. The panel has long acknowledged that waiting such time until the APVMA change its regulations could see discussions/action come to a halt as this could take some time to extend beyond the current six months requirement.

Organising committees are advised to consult with their veterinarian of choice regarding if/what biosecurity is required.

Develop a series of guidelines for Organising Committees and FEI vets when setting biosecurity entry conditions.

The panel recommends bringing together representatives from the two key groups (those being FEI Vets and EA Organising Committees) to develop a series of guidelines that will assist in determining if/what biosecurity entry conditions are required for events. The guidelines should be simple, easy to understand and easy to comply with.

It is important that this task is undertaken by Organising committees and FEI vets collaboratively, not in isolation of each other. It is recognised that the biosecurity arrangements will vary according to the venue facilities.