



Media Release

March 1, 2013

Breakthrough Hendra virus vaccination mandatory for 2013 Royal Queensland Show horses

The RNA is adopting Australian best practice in the fight against Hendra virus, with all horses attending or competing at 2013 Royal Queensland Show (Ekka) requiring mandatory Hendra virus vaccination.

The new Hendra virus vaccine safeguards the health and wellbeing of horses and their owners/handlers by breaking the cycle of transmission from flying foxes to horses and also from horses to humans.

RNA Chief Executive Brendan Christou said the association worked closely with Biosecurity Queensland and experienced biosecurity veterinarians to review and update the RNA's Biosecurity Plan.

"The RNA's primary consideration is the health and safety of all people and animals at the event. While the risk of contracting Hendra virus is extremely low we believe the introduction of mandatory Hendra virus vaccinations for all horses visiting the showgrounds, including horse competitors, is the best available preventative measure and will ensure we further mitigate the potential risks of this deadly virus," said Mr Christou.

Australian Veterinary Association President Dr Ben Gardiner said the AVA supports the RNA's decision to make vaccinations mandatory with the aim of protecting horses and humans.

"Research has demonstrated the vaccine is highly effective in preventing disease in horses and stopping the transmission of the Hendra virus," he said.

"The vaccine is the most effective tool available in the fight against Hendra virus and the AVA strongly recommends that all horses in Australia are vaccinated to protect them and to protect humans from this potentially fatal virus. The vaccine is administered by accredited veterinarians in an initial course of two injections," said Dr Gardiner.

Mr Christou said the RNA is looking forward to a great 2013 Ekka and a successful Horse Competition.

"Mandatory vaccinations for Hendra virus and several other biosecurity measures will ensure the highest standard of protection for the show's horse competitors and exhibitors," he said.

The RNA's additional biosecurity measures to mitigate risks of Hendra virus include:

- comprehensive stable cleaning and disinfecting measures
- plywood and plastic barriers between stables
- restricting public access to horses
- ensuring the areas under fig trees are thoroughly cleaned early each morning
- limiting the feeding and watering of horses to their stables.

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Exhibitors interested in entering the Royal Queensland Show's 2013 Horse Competition are encouraged to talk with their veterinarian about the vaccination process to ensure that they are fully informed, and visit www.royalqueenslandshow.com.au for more information on the entry requirements.

For more information about the Hendra virus vaccination, visit www.health4horses.com.au

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