

EQUESTRIAN QUEENSLAND RESPONSE TO EQUESTRIAN AUSTRALIA HENDRA WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS



Recommendation 1

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.

EQ response:

EQ agrees with the general intent of the recommendation, however disagrees with the proposal to require biosecurity risk assessments for each event for the following reasons and not limited to:

- it places a complex and undue burden on organising committees who are volunteers and who may not have the resources or skills to perform risk assessments
- it transfers unacceptable risk to the organising committee.

A risk assessment will not control the spread of disease, nor will it prepare organising committees to manage biosecurity incidents should they occur.

The comprehensive suite of biosecurity policies, plans and supporting documents developed by Equestrian Queensland in consultation with Biosecurity Queensland and endorsed by all relevant government departments as well as the Horse Industry Council does help organising committees:

- educate competitors and event attendees about safe practices
- identify and mitigate a broader range of potential biosecurity risks, and implement a contingency plan should an incident occur.

EQ proposes an amended recommendation:

Changing EA's general regulations to require biosecurity plans to be developed for events.

Recommendation 2

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.

EQ response:

EQ does not support this recommendation for the reasons outlined in our response to recommendation 1.

Further EQ believes creation of a new tool would be duplication of existing material.

We note the panel's intent to create a user-friendly document however we do not endorse the use of inexperienced or unqualified professionals to develop complex risk assessment templates.

Recommendation 3

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.

EQ response:

EQ does not support this recommendation because the EVA definition is not evidence based nor endorsed by DAF/Biosecurity Queensland or DPI NSW.

The EVA is a private special interest group representing the interests of veterinarians, and not necessarily the best interest of EA members.

Recommendation 4

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.

EQ response:

EQ acknowledges inconsistency between some vets' interpretation of a vaccinated horse and the conditions of the APVMA permit, however we reject the recommendation because we do not consider this is a matter within Equestrian Australia's jurisdiction as a sporting organisation.

Recommendation 5

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.

EQ response:

EQ acknowledges the intent of this recommendation however we reject the recommendation because we believe it is the role of state biosecurity experts to advise on biosecurity conditions for events.

EQ currently consults these authorities in planning for events.

Veterinarians may not have the relevant professional expertise to enable them to advise on biosecurity and further, any advice may represent a conflict of interest.

Further comments

As the state body whose members are most affected by the Hendra virus, EQ welcomes the review panel's decision not to recommend mandatory Hendra vaccination of horses at EA sanctioned events.

EQ also does not consider that the panel has addressed the terms of reference.

EQ believes that EA has invested more than enough time and effort in responding to the veterinary industry's discriminatory targeting of equestrian sports, in contrast to bigger equine industries such as thoroughbred racing, harness racing, camp drafting, and western.

EQ recommends that EA:

- 1. Makes a public statement that confirms there will be no EA mandating of Hendra vaccine or implementation of policies which forces organising committees to implement mandatory Hendra vaccination as part of every competition and acknowledges that:**
 - **there has never been a Hendra infection in an EA registered horse or at an EA sanctioned event**
 - **no one wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has ever been infected with Hendra virus**
 - **there has never been a human Hendra infection from the day to day handling of horses**
 - **many EA members who have exercised their right not to vaccinate against Hendra virus have been competitively disadvantaged.**
- 2. Adopts EQ's proposed amended recommendation 1.**
- 3. Educates members about good biosecurity practice and makes available to all industry stakeholders, the suite of biosecurity documents prepared by EQ in consultation with Biosecurity Queensland.**
- 4. Meets with FEI vets to communicate this position, and gain their commitment to provide their services at EA and FEI events.**

Yours Sincerely,



David Finch

Equestrian Queensland Chairman (on behalf of the board)