



Media release

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QRIC announces microchipping of Standardbred horses in Queensland and Hendra vaccination initiative

The Queensland Racing Integrity Commission has announced a one-off program for the microchipping of this year's Standardbred foals in Queensland.

"Harness Racing Australia (HRA) requires all Standardbred foals from the current breeding season to be microchipped in addition to the freeze branding currently required for the registration process," Commissioner Ross Barnett said.

"To aid industry in implementing this HRA initiative, the Commission is pleased to announce that it will provide a veterinarian to implant the microchip free of charge for the current season only.

"I'd like to stress that this is a one-off offer and whether the Commission is able to repeat it again next year will be subject to a cost review.

"So I'd really encourage breeders to jump on board while they can," Commissioner Barnett said.

In addition, owners of Standardbred foals will be given the option of receiving the first of the series of three Hendra vaccinations free of charge.

To comply with the licence conditions of the vaccine, foals will need to be 4 months of age or older to take advantage of this one-time offer.

"A QRIC vet will accompany the Commission's freeze branding representative to implant the microchip and, if requested, administer the first in a series of three Hendra vaccination shots," Commissioner Barnett said.

"We estimate these combined initiatives will save owners between \$120 and \$240 per foal.

"Owners taking up this voluntary first Hendra vaccination injection would remain responsible for the cost of the follow up second and third Hendra vaccinations and the yearly booster shots," he said.

A full course of vaccination consists of a primary course of two shots, administered 3-6 weeks apart, followed by the first booster six months later, and followed by annual boosters thereafter.

The deadly Hendra virus is an ongoing concern for Queensland's equine industry. Of the seven people who have contracted the virus in Queensland, four have died.

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“Vets can access a database to ascertain the vaccination status of a horse requiring treatment, but where they’re unable to do so they’re required to have the horse tested to rule out infection,” Commissioner Barnett said.

“This can delay treatment to an injured or sick horse for up to 72 hours while vets await test results.

“We’re concerned about the number of horses that have not been vaccinated against the Hendra virus and the potential effect on horse welfare that not vaccinating can have,” he said.

The Commission is expecting up to 300 Standardbred foals in south east Queensland to be microchipped this season and is encouraging owners to take up the Hendra vaccination offer.

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