



Media release

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Study confirms racehorse performance unaffected by Hendra Vaccine

A world first study has confirmed vaccination against the deadly Hendra virus does not affect the racing performance of thoroughbred horses.

“The Queensland Racing Integrity Commission (QRIC) funded the ground-breaking study so industry regulators and participants can base their decisions on accurate information and science rather than rumour and speculation,” Commissioner Ross Barnett said.

The extensive study examined the Timeform rating of 1,154 thoroughbreds over 12,066 race starts and assessed their performance one and three months before and after vaccination, with no difference in form detected.

Timeform rating is an established measure of a horse’s performance in a race that takes into account how the race was run and where the horse finished.

The QRIC’s chief vet Dr Martin Lenz says many factors can potentially affect the performance of racehorses, so it was important for the study to be large enough to distil out any impact that vaccination might have.

“The large numbers of horses and race starts examined means we can be confident of the findings, which back up the instincts of many astute trainers who already vaccinate their horses,” Dr Lenz said.

The results have just been published by the Australian Veterinary Journal. Please see link below. Dr Kathrin Schemann was the study’s lead author and is a Research Fellow in Veterinary Biostatistics and Epidemiology at the University of Sydney.

“Analysing the performance of each horse before and after vaccination over a short time period was the best way to assess the impact of vaccination as each horse acted as its own control,” Dr Schemann said.

The research team was led by Associate Professor Navneet Dhand. “This is one of the largest studies of its kind conducted to investigate the effect of any vaccine on horse racing performance anywhere in the world,” Associate Professor Dhand said.

“Thoroughbred racing participants can be confident of the results given the number of horses assessed.”

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Racing Queensland estimates thoroughbred horse racing makes a \$959-million contribution to the Queensland economy and sustains more than seven-and-a-half thousand jobs.

“Vaccination protects participants and animal welfare in an industry that is a sizeable contributor to the Queensland economy,” Commissioner Barnett said.

“The Commission will continue to encourage vaccination through programs like the first vaccination free offer for the 300 Standardbred foals expected this breeding season,” he said.

The Hendra vaccine study is available at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/avj.12679/epdf>

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