



Media Release

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QRIC microchips and vaccines benefit Harness industry

The Queensland Racing Integrity Commission (QRIC) has partnered with Harness Racing participants to deliver free microchipping to all Standardbred foals and the opportunity to have them vaccinated against the Hendra virus.

To assist Queensland Harness racing participants to meet a new Harness Racing Australia rule mandating microchipping for all Standardbred foals from the 2017 crop and onwards; the Commission provided the service free of charge for all 270 foals born last season. In addition, as a trial the Commission offered a free first injection of the Hendra vaccine for each of the foals.

QRIC Commissioner Ross Barnett has announced that the QRIC initiative would continue this year, but if a majority of racing participants receiving the service this year did not take up the Hendra vaccination offer, the program, including free microchipping would not continue next year.

“The first year of this initiative has seen a positive animal welfare outcome for the Harness racing code,” he said.

“Last year’s trial program led to 81 foals or 30 per cent of the 2017 foal crop receiving their first Hendra vaccine, and this was a huge increase from the number of foals previously vaccinated against the disease.

“Providing the veterinary resources and the first injection of the Hendra vaccine course free to the Harness racing industry has ensured the future welfare of these foals.

“The Commission will provide microchipping free of charge and the first vaccination against Hendra with the expectation that owners will complete the full course of Hendra vaccinations,” Mr Barnett said.

Earlier this year, a ground-breaking QRIC funded study confirmed vaccination against the deadly Hendra virus does not affect the racing performance of thoroughbred horses and this Standardbred program has also seen no reports of adverse effects in vaccinated foals.

QRIC Veterinary Services and Animal Welfare Director Dr Martin Lenz said he was encouraged by the response to this campaign that saw QRIC work closely with the harness code for an outcome that protected racing animals, their owners and trainers against Hendra.

“I’d like to acknowledge all participants for taking this responsible action, including one owner who made the decision to vaccinate his full crop of foals after the unfortunate loss of an unvaccinated brood mare to a twisted bowel,” Dr Lenz said.

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“Potentially lifesaving treatment for the affected mare had to be delayed until its negative Hendra status was confirmed.

“The QRIC urges all racehorse owners to take this aspect of the Hendra virus into consideration when deciding on whether to vaccinate their horses against this deadly disease.”

Breeders, Owners, Trainers and Reins-persons Association of Queensland (BOTRA) vice president Daren Garrard is encouraging all harness racing participants with foals this breeding season to take up the vaccination offer.

“The Hendra vaccine protects all of us from this devastating disease and we want to ensure that the program continues into next year, it’s up to the industry to keep this going,” he said.

ENDS.
