



By

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Southern studs overreact

Queensland breeders invest thousands of dollars each year in reproduction with the hope of big returns in the sales ring or racetrack.

But those interested in the prestigious Hunter Valley sires have hit a hurdle.

Due to their fear of Hendra Virus, a number of studs will not allow Queensland mares to stay overnight, while the big studs have even tougher 'protective procedures' in place.

Darley Stud's protocol is for a blood sample to be taken from the mare at least two days before travel. They request the sample to be sent to the Queensland DPI for testing and Darley must receive a copy of the result before the mare travels. Every visit to Darley will require a corresponding test.

A similar protocol exists at Arrowfield Stud. Their vet, Dr Mark Wiley, said it is simply a precaution to satisfy occupational health and safety requirements.

"Even though Hendra's very localised we don't want to see it spread," said Dr Wiley.

"Vets and the staff at studs need to have any risks sorted before a horse arrives at a property.

"It's mainly to help with the assessment of horses that are likely to arrive outside business hours and can't be properly inspected prior to contact with other horses or staff," said Dr Wiley.

The Hunter Valley Breeders Association (HVBA) has developed their own protocol to minimise the spread of disease.

I find these demands to be frustrating.

Not only is it an over reaction, it's an uninformed reaction. They obviously really do not know enough about Hendra Virus.

We've taken the steps to educate our members. Their (the HVBA's) concerns are unfounded.

It is unfortunate no NSW representatives, be it proprietors, vets or stud masters, took the time to attend the TBQA's recent Hendra Virus seminar to educate themselves.



Hunter Valley stud's negative reaction to Queensland mares will hopefully increase visits to our stallions Len Milner photo

It is pure ignorance and, in my opinion, a disgrace.

However president of the HVBA, Wayne Bedggood said their recommendations do not discriminate against Queensland horses.

"Although Hendra is definitely a concern, it's inaccurate to think this is just aimed at Queensland horses," said Mr Bedggood.

"This is protocol for horses from anywhere, whether it's Queensland, New South Wales or any other state that may have suspect issues.

"The Hunter Valley is actually battling a strangles outbreak, so these requirements will be used to protect the further transfer of that disease as well."

Mr Bedggood is concerned about the damage being done between the two states.

"We don't want to ruffle any feathers. It's a shame it's being taken that way, but I can understand it too," he said.

"We'll work to repair the relationship."

Thoroughbred Breeders Association chair, Peter McGauran will also work to maintain trade

and goodwill between the two states.

"We will circulate information about Hendra Virus to NSW breeders in an effort to inform and educate them so they have the confidence to ease some of the unnecessary restrictions in place now," Mr McGauran said.

"Understandably the NSW breeders are concerned for the health and safety of their staff and horses, but they are overreacting based on a lack of understanding of the true nature of the virus."

On a positive I believe this knee-jerk reaction from the south could work in Queensland's studs' favour.

All this will do is damage relationships with southern studs and that could have a very positive effect on Queensland studs.

People will hopefully decide to send their mares to Queensland stallions, instead of waste their time and valuable dollars satisfying the whims of the uninformed. ●

Hendra seminar proves valuable

It is the season to be jolly, so I'm ending 2009 on a festive note. The Thoroughbred Breeders Queensland Association's (TBQA) first industry seminar at the end of October was very successful. It was a very interesting and timely topic, Hendra Virus.

The seminar was held at UQ Gatton and we had fantastic speakers including: Ron Glanville, chief veterinarian officer; Allison Crook, DEEDI; Nigel Perkins, bio-chemist; and Hume Field, DPI Biosecurity expert.

I would like to thank them for their time and the invaluable information they provided. They covered everything including: what is Hendra Virus?; can horses spread it to each other?; do all infections lead to critical illness in humans?; risk management strategies; and an extensive list of other topics related to the virus.

I had excellent feedback from everyone who attended. They all left the day feeling much more confident about their knowledge of Hendra Virus. Even Thoroughbred Breeders Australia chairman, Peter McGauran made the effort to be present and he said the special trip from New South Wales was definitely worthwhile.

"The information provided by knowledgeable and experienced specialists in Hendra Virus was immensely valuable," Mr McGauran said.

"They were able to explain the circumstances in which the virus is likely to occur and its devastating affect if wrongly handled.

"As a result everybody learned what precautionary stages to take to minimise the risk of a viral outbreak and how to respond if it occurs."

Mr McGauran will now forward a briefing note to all Thoroughbred Breeders state divisions, because so far Queensland is the only state addressing the deadly virus.

"The TBQA is to be congratulated on its initiative, which benefits all horse sectors in Queensland and further a field," Mr McGauran said.

But despite such a successful day, I must say I'm disappointed by the relatively low attendance. We had less than 50 people, and half of those were not even TBQA members. The TBQA has a membership base of over 1000, and the seminar was also open to the general public. With the recent death of Rockhampton vet, Dr Alistair Rodgers, and numerous Hendra outbreaks across Queensland, it certainly was a timely event. I know it was a busy time of the breeding season, but still I think more people could have made an effort.

Hopefully there will be a better response to our next seminar on reproduction, which I am planning for the "off-season" next year. Unfortunately this conference will have to be on a user-pays basis, as the TBQA will not be able to absorb the costs a second time around. So keep your diaries open and I hope we can get a larger gathering for our next event.

Finally, on behalf of my family, and the TBQA committee, I'd like to wish you and your family a Merry Christmas, safe holidays and a very Happy New Year. ●

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