



**The Hon. JOHN COBB**  
**Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Food Security, Fisheries and Forestry**  
**Federal Member for Calare**

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Friday 21st May, 2010

**Cobb Again Calls on Labor to Fund Hendra Virus Vaccine Trials**

The Shadow Minister for Agriculture, John Cobb has called on the Rudd Government to immediately provide \$600,000 to ensure a trial into a vaccine for horses to protect them from the deadly Hendra virus can proceed as planned in the second half of this year.

Mr Cobb said he first made the plea for funding at the launch of the Queensland Horse Council Hendra Virus Horse Vaccine Trust Fund, in Toowoomba, which was attended by the families of veterinarians who had lost loved ones to the Hendra Virus.

“The latest outbreak on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland again reinforces the need for both the State and Federal Government’s to provide the small amount of funding needed to get the trial up and running.

“I am extremely concerned for the people who now have a anxious wait of up to six weeks to see if they have contracted the Hendra Virus,

“This is a major health issue and both the Ministers for Health and Agriculture need to explain why they are ignoring this important preventative health measure,” Mr Cobb said.

“As the health debate rages across the country, it is a worrying trend that research into zoonotic diseases is not been given the priority it deserves.

“The Hendra virus has a mortality rate of 57% in humans and 75% in horses (however, a policy of compulsory euthanasia of recovered horses under the AUSTVETPLAN brings it to 100%).

“The Hendra Virus is so lethal it is classified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the USA as Critical Biological Agents Category C. These are emerging pathogens that could be engineered for mass dissemination in the future because of availability, ease of production with potential for high mortality and morbidity rates and which cause a major health impact. They are therefore viral agents of national significance to the security of livestock industries and public health.

Mr Cobb said the CSIRO Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL), Geelong, is committed to starting a vaccination trial with horses in the second quarter of 2010 using the highly promising adjuvanted vaccine candidate against Hendra Virus which is being formulated at the Commonwealth Serum Laboratory.

“The Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) estimates that the cost of this horse vaccine trial is around \$930,000 over 15 months and has committed \$330,000 and is seeking external funding of \$600,000 because of lack of Government funding.

“If the CSIRO trial is not fully funded then this will delay the necessary research and development work , which ultimately may cause further disruptions to industry and the potential for more human fatalities.

“The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA), Equine Veterinarians Australia (EVA), and the Queensland Horse Council (QHC) are so concerned for the welfare of their members that they are looking at ways to fund the balance and are seeking Government support.

Mr Cobb said the AVA has stated the best strategy to prevent infection in humans is by the use of a safe, effective vaccine in animals rather than to try to treat this deadly virus once a person is infected.

For a community organisation to raise \$600,000 is not an easy task and I believe that the issue is so urgent and in reality \$600,000 to either a State or a Federal Government is not a great deal of money for this important research which will and can save lives.

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