



## Australian Racing Board Limited

9<sup>th</sup> April 2008

The Hon. Ian Callinan AC  
Commissioner  
Equine Influenza Inquiry

Dear Commissioner,

### **Re: Vaccination Post Eradication**

I am aware that on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April counsel for Coolmore, Mr Ryan, made oral submissions to you that included a proposal that consideration be given to ongoing vaccination of certain sectors of the horse industry against equine influenza (EI) following eradication of the disease from Australia. Mr Ryan indicated in his submissions that ongoing vaccination of the thoroughbred sector against EI had the support of the Australian Racing Board, and I am writing to confirm this.

At the outset I reiterate our support for the exposure recommendations that have been formulated with the objective of preventing future quarantine breakdowns associated with the import of live horses. We are confident that the evidence that has been unearthed by the Commission relating the causes of this outbreak, together with the implementation of such recommendations as you ultimately make will reduce to the maximum extent possible the potential for a future EI outbreak to occur.

Our rationale for proposing ongoing vaccination of thoroughbred horses is directed solely to adding an additional layer of protection as a risk management measure: while the risk of an future EI outbreak will be low as a consequence of the work done by the Commission of Inquiry, the damage that would be sustained by thoroughbred racing and breeding if a future outbreak was to occur is so large that we consider that ongoing vaccination is prudent as an additional protective measure.

We believe that it is relevant to note in this regard that horses involved in thoroughbred racing and breeding are the most mobile animals within the Australian population of horses. Furthermore thoroughbred racing and breeding constitute the highest value components of the horse industry: more than 60% of the loss of income to the horse industry caused by the August 2007 EI outbreak was loss of income sustained by thoroughbred racing and breeding<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Estimate extrapolated from ABARE report to CCEAD

In our respectful measure there are no substantive counter arguments against the thoroughbred sector being permitted to carry out ongoing vaccination.

An issue that is commonly raised in this context is the cost of an ongoing vaccination. It should be made clear in this regard that the thoroughbred sector is cognisant of the costs involved and proposes ongoing vaccination of thoroughbreds on the basis that thoroughbred sector would absorb **all** of the associated costs – there would be no claim made on public moneys and no costs borne by any other sector of the horse industry. This statement is made with the benefit of full consultation with the bodies that represent those thoroughbred sector participants most affected (owners, breeders and trainers), who have signalled their unqualified acceptance of these costs.

I am aware that submissions have been made by the Australian Horse Industry Council raising supposed risks associated with ongoing vaccination. In our respectful submission these arguments have no substance. In this regard the thoroughbred sector acknowledges the necessity for ongoing vaccination to be accompanied by a comprehensive monitoring program, including as a means of addressing any biosecurity issues that might be perceived to be associated with ongoing vaccination. Indeed, the Australian Racing Board has agreed that as part of an ongoing vaccination program the industry would establish and fund the following:

- (a) Permanent identification of all horses that are vaccinated.
- (b) Permanent recording of all vaccinations administered, with these records kept by the Australian Stud Book.
- (c) Regular testing of vaccinated horses to ensure that the immunity is of sufficient level to prevent infection and virus excretion.
- (d) Regular testing of our horses to ensure that Equine Influenza virus is not circulating in our horse population. This would ensure that any virus circulating was detected and its composition checked to ensure that there had been no significant change over time.
- (e) Auditing of the vaccination program to ensure compliance with appropriate meaningful penalties for transgressions.

Finally, I note that the Australian Racing Board has consulted widely on this issue and has received unqualified support for ongoing vaccination from the following industry organisations:

- The Australian Thoroughbred Racehorse Owners Council
  - The Australian Trainers Association
  - Thoroughbred Breeders Australia
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In all these circumstances we respectfully urge you to recommend that the necessary regulatory approvals be granted that would permit the implementation of an industry-run program of ongoing vaccination against EI of horses involved in thoroughbred racing and breeding.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Bob Pearson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr RC (Bob) Pearson  
Chairman  
**Australian Racing Board Ltd.**