



Media Release

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ERMA NEW ZEALAND RECEIVES APPLICATION FOR GM HORSE FLU VACCINE

The Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA New Zealand) has received an application from the equine industry to use a genetically modified (GM) vaccine, to protect New Zealand horses against the equine influenza virus.

The virus caused major disruption in the horse racing and breeding industry in Australia last year. During this epidemic, Australia imported a GM vaccine, called Proteq Flu, to help control the disease. ERMA New Zealand has now received a joint application from the New Zealand Racing Board and the Equine Health Association to import this GM vaccine.

ERMA New Zealand's General Manager, New Organisms, Dr Libby Harrison, says the application is for the conditional release of a genetically modified organism and will be subject to full public consultation. "The Authority's decision-making committee will consider potential adverse effects on public safety and health, valued species, societies and communities, the economy, the environment and natural habitats."

Public submissions are invited on the application and must be received by 29 July 2008. These can be made in writing or online through ERMA New Zealand's website, www.ermanz.govt.nz

A public hearing will be held on the application if requested by submitters.

The application covers Proteqflu and Proteqflu Te. Proteqflu Te also protects against tetanus.

The GM equine flu vaccine would also have to be approved by the New Zealand Food Safety Authority's Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Group before it could be used.

In December, ERMA New Zealand approved an application from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Biosecurity New Zealand (MAFBNZ) to use the non-GM Flu Avert® I.N vaccine in the event of equine influenza being identified in horses in New Zealand.

For further information contact:

Lesley Meadows, Communications Manager, ERMA New Zealand.

◆ Telephone +64 -4 -918 4835

◆ Mobile 021 224 3304

◆ Facsimile +64- 4 -914 0433

◆ Email: lesley.meadows@ermanz.govt.nz