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GONE TO THE DOGS

Fears as killer Hendra virus jumps species

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A BELOVED family pet will be destroyed to protect human health after testing positive to the Hendra virus in a frightening new twist to the latest outbreak.

The kelpie, Dusty, is the first canine to develop the deadly virus outside of a laboratory, although it has shown no signs of illness.

The Fearon family, whose Mount Alford property was at the centre of a Hendra outbreak this month, were last night devastated the disease would claim another cherished pet. "To have to tell our children that this is going to happen is really awful," Liz Fearon told *The Courier-Mail* yesterday.

Queensland's Chief Veterinary Officer Rick Symons said scientific experts could not rule out the virus coming back in Dusty and potentially infecting people.

"There's a really high risk in keeping that dog alive," he said. "It's the potential threat to humans. This is quite a nasty disease. Four out of the seven people who've had the disease have died and, therefore, leaving it alive is really putting people at risk."

The dramatic new development yesterday prompted calls for more money to research the



RISK TO HUMANS: A dog at the Fearon family's Mount Alford home yesterday.

virus ahead of an emergency meeting of experts in Brisbane today.

It also will further fuel debate about culling flying foxes, which carry the disease, as authorities try to find out what has sparked the eight virus outbreaks across the state in the past month alone.

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