

Equine Vaccination

What Do We Vaccinate For?

The diseases most commonly vaccinated for are Equine Influenza and Tetanus. Vaccinations are also available for Equine Herpes Virus, Rotavirus, and West Nile Virus. Drug companies are currently developing a vaccination for Strangles but it is not available yet.

Why Vaccinate?

The diseases we vaccinate for are either very contagious, or cause nasty clinical signs which may lead to death.

Equine influenza

- Caused by equine influenza virus
- Clinical signs include fever (temperature 39-42°C), dry hacking cough, runny nose, lethargic, depressed, and reluctant to eat.
- They usually recover in 2-3 weeks, though secondary infection is not uncommon so full recovery may take longer.
- The disease is very contagious, and the whole population of yard may be affected within 2-3 days.
- Diagnosis can usually be made based on clinical signs, and confirmed with a blood test or swab.
- Prevention: VACCINATION!!!!!!

Tetanus

- Caused by a toxin produced by the bacteria *Clostridium Botulinum*.
- Clinical signs include muscular spasm, in particular the masseter muscle of the jaw "Lock Jaw". Can present initially as colic.
- The disease carries a high mortality rate (75%).
- Recovery is very rare. Signs stabilise after approx 1 week, with prolonged recovery period (6 weeks).
- Clinical signs usually diagnostic.
- Treatment (if attempted) includes intensive nursing care and administration of tetanus antitoxin (TAT).
- Prevention: VACCINATION!!!!!!
- Prophylactic use of TAT is advisable in foals and unvaccinated horses with skin wounds.

Equine Herpes Virus

- Can cause mild respiratory disease and abortion.
- Vaccination of pregnant mares is advised.

Rotavirus

- Causes severe diarrhoea. Primarily a problem in foals.
- Vaccination of pregnant mares protects the foal

West Nile Virus

- Causes severe neurological symptoms.
- Not currently in the UK, but in Europe. One to watch for the future!

What Should I Vaccinate My Horse For?

As a bare minimum, all horses should be vaccinated for tetanus. If your horse never leaves the yard, and there are no other horses on the property leaving the yard on a regular basis, vaccinating for tetanus only is adequate.

Any horse competing (at any level), hunting, doing fun rides, or leaving the yard regularly (other than hacking) should be vaccinated for influenza and tetanus. The frequency of vaccination will depend on whether the horse is competing and under which governing body (see below).

Vaccination protocols

	BHS/Jockey Club Rules	FEI Rules	Tetanus Only
1st Dose	Influenza and Tetanus	Influenza and Tetanus	1st vaccination
2nd Dose	Influenza and Tetanus 21-92 days later	Influenza and Tetanus 21-92 days later	4-6 weeks later
3rd Dose	Influenza 150-215 days later	Influenza 150-215 days later	1 year from second
Booster	Within 365 days	Within 365 days AND within 6 months + 21 days of FEI competition	Every 2 years