

VACCINATIONS FOR HORSES

Why should horses be vaccinated?

Routinely vaccinating your horses can help to protect them against relatively common diseases like tetanus, strangles, equine herpes virus, and salmonella. These diseases can be quite nasty and even deadly. The vaccines available are safe to use and are generally excellent in protecting your animals, so long as regular booster shots are given. Also, the cost of vaccinations is a lot cheaper than the cost of treatment and the value of your horses.

What is tetanus?

Tetanus is caused by the bacterial organism, *Clostridium tetani*, which lives in manure and soil. The bacteria enter the body through wounds and multiply in areas with low amounts of oxygen. Hence, they love the environment made by deep wounds. The bacteria produce a nasty toxin which acts on nerves causing the horse's muscles to start cramping. Tetanus is deadly in about 80% of horses. Because the bacteria are widespread in the environment, **all horses should be vaccinated against tetanus.**

What is strangles?

Strangles is a very contagious disease caused by the bacteria *Streptococcus equi var equi*. It is spread by contact with infected horses or subclinical carriers, or by horses coming into contact with items contaminated with nasal discharge or pus draining from lymph nodes of infected horses (such as water troughs, feed bins, tack etc.). The disease mainly affects younger horses but older horses may become infected if they haven't been vaccinated or previously had the disease. If your horses attend studs, shows or camps, or go away on agistment, they are at risk of developing strangles and should be vaccinated throughout their life.

What is equine herpes virus?

EHV-1 and EHV-4 are viruses that cause respiratory disease, abortion, early neonatal death of foals, and neurological disease in infected adult horses. A vaccination is available to control the respiratory and abortion symptoms. This may be administered to any horse, but is particularly recommended for broodmares.

What is salmonella?

Salmonella is caused by many strains of the bacteria *Salmonella*. Infection may cause diarrhoea or septicæmia or both. A vaccine is available for the prevention of salmonella.

Can I vaccinate my horses against Hendra virus?

Yes! A vaccine has recently become available to protect your horses against Hendra virus. Hendra virus is a rare disease, spread by flying foxes, which can kill both horses and people.

What vaccination protocol is right for my horse?

There is no standard vaccination programme that is suitable for all horses. It is important to talk with your veterinarian and devise a protocol which will provide maximum protection for your horses.

Are vaccinations enough to keep my horses healthy?

Whilst vaccinations are an integral component of disease prevention, they do not prevent disease in all circumstances. It is important to maintain good management practices as this can reduce a horse's exposure to disease-causing pathogens and promote resistance to disease. Keeping a healthy stable with good quarantine measures, providing adequate nutrition, along with regular veterinary check-ups can reduce the risk of infectious disease developing in your horses.

For further information on vaccinations for your horses, please contact Cowra Veterinary Centre.