

Spring Preventative Care (One Size Does Not Fit All!)

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With the onset of spring it is time once again to revisit our horse's routine health needs. While there are some basics that all horses need to have, you should speak with your own Veterinarian to custom fit a program that meets your horse's specific needs.

Vaccinations

In general the quality of the available vaccines continues to improve every year, but so does the number of available vaccines. Some are more protective than others. Some are recommended regardless of your horse's exposure to other horses. Others become only important for horses that are in situations where they will potentially be exposed to infectious agents (this includes horses that are shipping, competing, or being exposed to a stressed, changing population).

- **Tetanus, Eastern/Western Encephalomyelitis and Rabies** all recommended annually for all horses. They are safe and effective vaccines. Rabies is available only from your Veterinarian due to safeguards set up by the state to insure good records for this zoonotic (transmissible to human), fatal disease.
- **West Nile Virus** has had a great impact on our country in the last few years, with many more fatalities than from Tetanus, Encephalitis or Rabies. The vaccine was new last year, but data shows it to be safe and fairly protective. We recommend it for all horses in the late spring or early summer. Horses traveling south may need more frequent boosters.
- **Influenza and Rhinopneumonitis** are viral respiratory diseases. Rhinopneumonitis can also cause abortion and neurological disease. Horses that are stressed, shipped, very young, in training, or exposed to new horses are at greatest risk. Isolated horses that never are exposed to other horses have a much lower chance of contracting these diseases. There are several new vaccines (intranasal and intramuscular) for both viruses that are much more effective than previous vaccines. Vaccination will reduce the incidence and severity of the disease, but will not prevent it in all cases. It is recommend every 6 months for horses at risk. The abortion form of Rhinopneumonitis requires vaccination at 5, 7, and 9 months of gestation. There are no vaccines labeled to prevent the neurological form of the disease.
- **Strangles** is a bacterial respiratory disease spread by horse to horse contact. As with the respiratory viruses, horses that are moving, stressed, and exposed to a changing population are at greatest risk, while isolated horses have little chance of contracting the disease. The disease is endemic in some populations of horses. There is a very safe and effective intranasal vaccine for this disease. As faulty administration can cause failure or illness in horses, we generally recommend that it be given to at-risk horses by trained personnel.
- **Potomac Horse Fever (PHF)** is an ehrlicheal disease that causes fever, colic and diarrhea in horses. The disease is spread through fresh water snails, not horse-to-horse contamination. There are several vaccines available that have been shown to decrease the incidence and severity of the disease, but they are far from 100% effective.
- **Equine Protozoal Myelitis (EPM)** is a parasitic neurological disease of horses. The vaccine is unproven, and may be of limited value.

Not all vaccines are created equal, and proper handling at all times is vital to insure efficacy. You should consult with your Veterinarian when designing a program that best fits your horse's needs.

Coggins (Equine Infectious Anemia) is a viral disease of horses. There is no treatment or vaccine, and positive horses are isolated or destroyed. Horses that are moving within New York are required to be tested every two years. Some shows, sales, tracks and interstate movement require more frequent testing. Plan ahead so that your activities are not hindered because of the lack of a Coggins Test!

Parasite Control programs should be reviewed annually. Population density has the greatest impact on frequency of de-worming. Daily dewormers give the most comprehensive protection. There are also a variety of high quality paste and top-dressing products available. Consult your Veterinarian to set up a program that will best protect your animals from these potentially fatal invaders!

Dentistry has improved greatly in the last few years. Your horse's health and performance will be enhanced and prolonged by evaluation and treatment by a trained Equine Dentist. Only a Veterinarian can safely and legally administer sedation to horses. Lay personnel leave you and your horse at excessive risk.