

# Cambridge Equine Hospital

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## Vaccination

Vaccination is at the heart of our preventative healthcare service. Vaccination is an effective and cost efficient way of protecting your horse from common preventable diseases, such as equine influenza, tetanus, strangles and for respiratory infection and abortion caused by equine herpes virus 1 & 4 (EHV1,4). Vaccination also assists in the prevention of the spread of these diseases should an outbreak occur. Horses competing in many competitions not only nationally, but also internationally, must meet certain health requirements, not just for their own welfare, but also to prevent the spread of certain diseases to other horses.

### Equine Influenza (Horse Flu)

This is a common viral respiratory disease that is highly infectious and is associated with high fever, a dry cough and occasionally a nasal discharge. The viral damage in the lower airway can allow secondary bacterial infection. Signs include a very high temperature which usually lasts for 1-3 days, a frequent harsh, dry cough that can last for several weeks, a clear, watery nasal discharge that may become thick and yellow, enlarged glands under the lower jaw, clear discharge from the eyes, depression, loss of appetite and swelling of the lower limbs.

As soon as a horse shows any suspect signs, strict hygiene and isolation procedures should be enforced. Any horses that have been in contact with the affected horse should be carefully monitored and all movement should be restricted on and off the premises, as they may be incubating the disease. The disease is spread by inhalation of virus released into the atmosphere by coughing. Equine Influenza may spread very rapidly through a yard if individuals are unvaccinated. If you suspect your horse has equine influenza you should contact your vet to initiate steps to help stop the spread of the disease.

Regular vaccination is essential to the prevention of outbreaks of equine influenza. When the disease occurs locally, it may be advisable to give a booster to any horse that has not been vaccinated in the previous 6 months. All horses with respiratory infections should be given complete rest and often require a long period of convalescence. Good stable ventilation and management is essential.

### Tetanus

Tetanus is a disease of the nervous system caused by the toxins from a bacterium, *Clostridium tetani*, which is found in soil. The bacterium usually enters the horse through puncture wounds, particularly in the foot. Even small wounds can allow *Clostridium tetani* contamination and because the incubation period is 7-21 days, the wound has usually healed by the time the first signs of the disease are apparent. Horses are one of the most susceptible species and the disease is frequently fatal, so vaccination is essential. Fortunately, tetanus is seldom seen nowadays, due to the fact that most owners keep their horses currently

vaccinated. The initial course involves two injections 4-6 weeks apart. This is followed by booster injections every two to three years, depending on which vaccine is used.

Tetanus and influenza can be administered in a single injection and both vaccination courses can be started simultaneously. It is important that in-foal mares are given a booster vaccination during pregnancy to provide the foal with a degree of protection from birth. This booster is best given 4-6 weeks before foaling. The foal should start its own vaccinations against tetanus at 5-6 months old.

### **Equine Herpes Virus (EHV 1,4)**

Equine herpes viruses can cause a variety of symptoms, the most important being respiratory disease, abortion and occasionally neurological abnormalities. Respiratory disease is more severe in foals and young horses, and close contact is required for transmission of infection. Vaccination is therefore recommended in competition and racing yards, or where horses travel and mix with others frequently. These vaccinations are also required for brood mares to guard against abortion. The vaccine does not protect against the neurological form of the disease, and its use is not recommended in a neurological disease outbreak.

For protection against respiratory disease, the primary vaccination course consists of two injections 4-6 weeks apart, followed by a booster every 6 months. Foals may be vaccinated from 5 months of age. As an aid in the prevention of abortion, pregnant mares should be vaccinated during the 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy.

## **Rules and Regulations for Vaccination**

The Jockey Club, FEI, Pony Club and various other equine authorities require that your horse is vaccinated for Equine Influenza to compete. Each pony or horse must have a valid vaccination certificate which relates to that pony or horse, completed, signed and stamped on each relevant line by a veterinary surgeon who is not the owner of the pony or horse. It must state that the pony or horse has received the appropriate course of injections:

- Primary Vaccination Course: Two injections, 4-6 weeks apart.
- First Booster: An injection 5-7 months after the primary course.
- Annual Booster: Booster injections are required annually, except for horses competing under the FEI rules which require boosters every 6 months.

Vaccinations cannot be given within 7 days prior to competition or entry into competition stables. If an injection is given later than is required by these rules, a new course must be started, beginning with a primary vaccination course. To avoid unnecessary delays with competition, please schedule your vaccination in advance and have your horse's passport available at the time of vaccination for signature.

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Please contact us on: **01223 760535**, or email [cambridgeequine@vet.cam.ac.uk](mailto:cambridgeequine@vet.cam.ac.uk) to arrange routine vaccination at your yard, or to discuss any questions about the services available. Full details can be found in the latest version of the FEI Veterinary Regulations ([www.fei.org/veterinary/vaccinations-and-health-requirements](http://www.fei.org/veterinary/vaccinations-and-health-requirements))

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