

Equine Vaccinations

There are many vaccinations available for horses, some of which you will probably already be very familiar with.

Equine Influenza

Influenza is a highly contagious viral respiratory disease, causing a high temperature, harsh frequent cough, anorexia and often a slight nasal discharge. Our recommendation is that all horses regularly coming into contact with different horses are vaccinated against Influenza. This is particularly important if you are attending shows. Many associations, such as the BSJA and even local Riding Clubs, can and will check whether horses competing at their shows are up to date with their Influenza vaccinations and that these have been administered at the correct time intervals. The rules as to when these vaccinations should be given are issued by the Jockey Club and shown below.

Primary Course

1st influenza vacc
(can be combined with tetanus)
21-92 days



2nd influenza vacc
(can be combined with tetanus)
150-215 days



Third Booster

3rd influenza vacc
(tetanus not necessary at this time)
Up to 365 days



Annual Influenza vacc
(with tetanus every two years)

If a horse's annual vaccination is even **one day late**, the whole course must be started again if they are likely to be taking part in any shows where the organising body states vaccinations must be up to date. Horses which have received Influenza vaccinations cannot enter a racecourse for seven days following this.

FEI rules for horses competing in international level competitions are slightly different. The primary course is as stated above but the horse must receive an influenza vaccination within six months of any FEI competition they attend.

Tetanus Vaccination

Vaccination against tetanus is a basic minimum requirement for all horses and ponies against a usually fatal disease. Any horses we see with wounds will receive a tetanus booster if they are not up to date with these vaccinations, but obviously horses get many wounds which do not require a vet's attention. Equally, many cases of tetanus are related to unvaccinated horses which have foot abscesses.

For the vaccination protocol, horses require two vaccinations four to six weeks apart and then boosters every two years.

Equine Herpes Virus

Herpes virus in horses can cause respiratory disease, abortion in pregnant mares and occasionally neurological problems. Primarily we use this vaccine in pregnant mares in the fifth, seventh and ninth month of pregnancy.

Frequently asked questions

Can I ride my horse after they have received their vaccination?

The vaccines we use today are not live vaccines as they have been in years gone by so there is no reason why you can't ride your horse the same day. Normally we suggest light work without getting them too sweated up. Vaccine reactions are rare these days and, if occur, are usually confined to a soft tissue swelling where the injection was administered.

When can my foal start its vaccinations?

Foals receive antibodies from their mothers via colostrum and so any vaccine given while these antibodies are still at high levels in the foals system would not be effective. Most vaccines can be used from five months of age.