

# Equine Care

---

Confused on which vaccine to give your horse? That's because every horse's needs are different and depend on age, where the horse lives, and where it travels.

Every horse should receive "core vaccines" at least once yearly. Core vaccines are those vaccines that protect against diseases that are endemic to a region, cause a potential public health significance, are required by law, and/or pose a risk of serious disease.

*Core Vaccines in our area are as follows:*

*Tetanus*

*Eastern/Western Equine Encephalomyelitis*

*West Nile Virus*

*Rabies*

If your horse is stabled alone or with one or two other horses and never leaves for shows or trail rides, these are the only vaccines he/she needs. Basically, the risk to other diseases is so low it does not warrant further vaccination. If, however, your horse stays at a boarding facility or is active on the show circuit and trail rides, you need more protection due to an increase risk of coming into contact with more diseases.

*Risk-Based Vaccinations in our area:*

*Rhinopneumonitis (Rhino)*

*Influenza (Flu)*

*Streptococcus Equi (Strangles)*

*Potomac Horse Fever*

*Botulism*

If your horse is exposed to a large number of other horses through boarding or while at shows and/or on trail rides, you should consider one or more of these vaccines.

## **Rhinopneumonitis (Rhino) and Influenza (Flu)**

These viruses are often grouped together since they are both involved with respiratory disease in horses. Risk from these viruses is greater in younger horses (<5 years) and horses exposed to large numbers of other horses. Both of these viruses are highly contagious and spread via direct and indirect contact of nasal secretions.

Rhinopneumonitis is also known to cause abortion in pregnant mares.

Rhinopneumonitis and Influenza vaccines are recommended every six months (Spring and Fall).

Rhinopneumonitis vaccination (killed) is recommended during the fifth, seventh, and ninth month of pregnancy to prevent abortions.

We recommend a modified live rhino vaccine and an intranasal flu vaccine both spring and fall for horses in higher risk environments. We do offer a killed rhino/flu combo.

Pregnant mares should only receive killed rhino vaccines during pregnancy.

## **Streptococcus Equi (Strangles)**

Strangles is a highly contagious disease caused by a bacteria. It is transmitted by direct contact with infected horses or indirectly by contact with contaminated equipment, clothing, or handlers. Clinical signs include fever, difficulty swallowing, lack of eating, and mucopurulent nasal discharge. Strangles most commonly affects young horses (weanlings and yearlings) but can affect horses of any age.

Vaccination is recommended for any horses, especially young horses, that are exposed to areas known to have had strangles cases. Horses exposed to large numbers of horses are also at an increased risk for strangles infection.

We recommend intranasal strangles vaccination yearly to horses in higher risk environments.

## Potomac Horse Fever

Potomac Horse Fever is a disease caused by a bacteria, *Ehrlichia risticii*, that causes fever, diarrhea, and laminitis. This disease is seasonal and usually peaks in July, August, and September. Horses that live or frequent areas where cases of Potomac Horse Fever have been diagnosed, should be vaccinated each year. The vaccine should be timed to give peak protection during the summer months.

The recommendation for this vaccine is solely dependent on whether a horse lives or travels in areas with known cases of Potomac Horse Fever.

## Botulism

Botulism is caused by ingestion of botulinum toxin produced by the bacteria, *Clostridium botulinum*. This is a potent toxin and when ingested causes weakness, paralysis, and frequently death. Botulism is most often contracted by eating spoiled hay which allows the bacteria to grow and produce toxin. There have been reports of botulism from contaminated wounds but most owners treat their horses injuries too quickly for this to be a problem in this area. Botulism does not transmit from one horse to another and affects only those horses that ingest the toxin. There is a greater concern for Botulism in horses fed large round bales since areas of spoilage are more likely than smaller square bales.

We recommend Botulism vaccination to any horses being fed lower quality hay or round bales that could expose them to botulinum toxin.

\*All vaccines need to be boosted 2-4 weeks after the initial vaccination. The time between boosters and number of boosters depends on the specific vaccine and applies mostly to foals and young horses just starting their vaccines.

\*\*These guidelines are meant to give horse owners a general outline of proper vaccinations. All vaccine programs should be tailored for each individual horse's risk factors.