

# How to vaccinate a

By Lindsay Taylor

It is important to have vaccination protocol in place for all horses, regardless of what they are used for (ranch work, pleasure riding, rodeos, shows, etc.) and whether they are by themselves in a pasture or mingling with other horses. Vaccinations should be given against local disease concerns for isolated animals and against common contagious diseases for animals frequently exposed to other horses.

Having some kind of plan in place for what to vaccinate for and when is a relatively easy way to avoid illness, though the type of work the animal is

used for and environmental conditions will play a role in developing that plan.

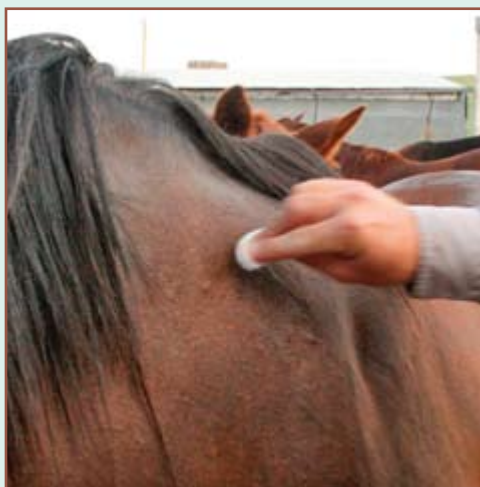
Most horses are vaccinated annually with a “three-way” or “four-way” shot. This usually covers eastern and western equine encephalomyelitis (sleeping sickness), tetanus (lockjaw), and influenza. Many horses are also now being vaccinated for West Nile virus. Depending on environmental conditions and veterinary recommendations, horses may also be vaccinated for rhinopneumonitis (rhino), strangles, Potomac horse fever, or rabies. A veterinarian will make this decision based on prevalent disease concerns and the frequency a horse is introduced to other animals.

A booster shot, given four to six weeks after the first dose, should follow the first time a horse receives a vaccination. Once this has been done, vaccines can be administered on an annual basis. Pick a convenient time of year, typically before flying insects are out in full force, and stick to that month or even the day, every year. Record keeping is important. This makes it easier to remember when horses were last vaccinated and when they are due for boosters.

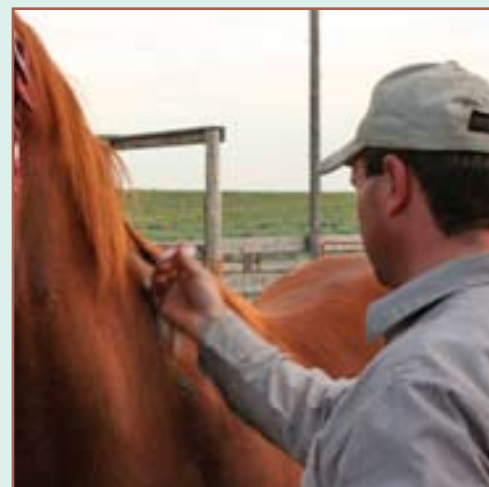
Most of these vaccines are administered as an intramuscular (IM) shot, in which the vaccine is injected directly into the muscle. This can be a fairly quick and easy process as long as



*Step 1 – Locate the appropriate place to inject the shot. Intramuscular (IM) shots in horses can be given in the back of the thigh muscle or in the neck/shoulder region. The neck/shoulder region can be easier, especially if the horse is prone to kicking.*



*Step 2 – Rid the area of dirt and manure, and wipe the injection site with alcohol. Round cotton pads or cotton balls work very well. This helps prevent bacteria on the hide or hair from entering the injection site.*



*Step 3 – Tap the injection site with the back of the hand or fist. That way the horse is used to pressure on the spot and is less surprised by the needle.*

# horse



certain steps are followed to prevent abscesses or infection.

There are a few other considerations when giving vaccinations:

- Each shot should be given using a new, clean needle.
- Each shot should be given in its own injection site.
- When giving more than one vaccine, it is helpful to record where each was given. That way if a reaction does occur, it is possible to determine the cause. A reaction may be anything from swelling to

abscessing. If there is a reaction, a veterinarian should be contacted.

By following these steps, many people are able to vaccinate their horses at home. If unsure of any of these steps or not comfortable giving the shots yourself, have a veterinarian provide this disease protection

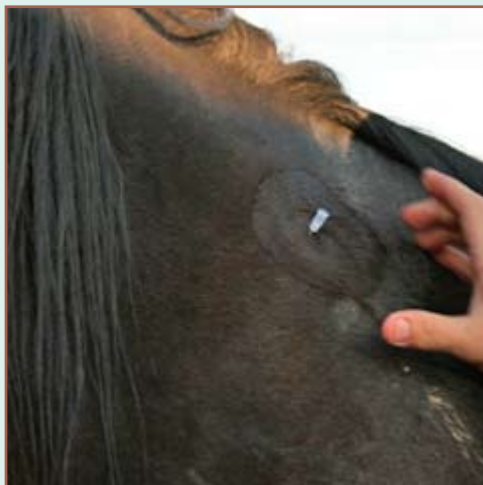
Vaccinating against common diseases is a relatively low-cost way to save on large veterinary bills in the future.

For more information on vaccination protocols or equine diseases, contact your veterinarian or a local office of the University of Wyoming Cooperative

Extension Service (contact information is at <http://ces.uwyo.edu/Counties.asp>), or find equine health articles online through many university extension programs across the country.

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System publication *How to Give your Horse an Intramuscular Injection* is available at [www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-1018/](http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-1018/). Equine-related articles, including equine diseases, are available on the Montana State University Extension Web page at <http://animalrangeextension.montana.edu/equine/equine.htm>.

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*Step 4 – Inject the needle all the way to the hub of the needle (place where the syringe is attached to the needle). By inserting the needle without the syringe, it is possible to tell if you have hit a vein or artery, which you do not want to do with an IM shot. If blood comes out of the needle, you have hit a vein and need to take the needle out and try again.*



*Step 5 – Attach the syringe to the needle and slowly depress the plunger.*



*Step 6 – Remove the needle and syringe, and gently massage the injection site with your hand, which may aid in distributing the vaccine, and quietly talk to the horse to reassure the animal everything is OK. This will help prevent a needle-shy horse.*