



# Horse Health

**I**nfectious disease-control programs are important to protect the health of your horse. A healthy horse will produce and perform better than one that is not feeling well.

Many factors influence the health of a horse – feeding, pasture management, dental care, parasite control, training and exercise, housing, fly control, sanitation, and other practices. They all interact in the overall effectiveness of a disease-control program.

Vaccination is an important part of horse disease management. Consult your veterinarian to develop a comprehensive vaccination program that is appropriate to your situation and geographic location. Foals should begin their vaccination program at 6 months of age.

**West Nile virus** was detected in 13 of Wyoming's 23 counties in 2005, but it is a risk for horses in all counties.

Adult horses require two doses of a vaccine 30 days apart for the initial series, while weanlings require three doses. After the first year, all horses require at least one annual booster. Some veterinarians are recommending a booster in the spring and again in late summer.

**Influenza** is one of the most common infectious respiratory diseases of horses. This disease is highly contagious and spreads rapidly through groups of horses. Vaccination against influenza is highly recommended for all horses, especially those with significant exposure to horses from outside facilities such as those for breeding, racing, boarding, ropings, shows, and other events.

**Equine encephalomyelitis** (also known as sleeping sickness, EEE, WEE, VEE) is transmitted by mosquitoes and other blood-sucking insects. This disease is not directly contagious from horse to horse. Vaccination against sleeping sickness is highly effective and recommended for all horses. An annual booster is required.

# a little bit about Management



**Equine herpesvirus** (Rhinopneumonitis) is caused by two different viruses – equine herpesvirus type 1 (EHV-1) and equine herpesvirus type 4 (EHV-4). Both viruses cause a respiratory tract infection with a mild fever and nasal discharge at a minimum. It is also known to cause abortion in pregnant mares. This virus is most prevalent in weanlings, yearlings, and young horses entering training. It is strongly recommended these age groups of horses and pregnant mares receive this vaccination.

**Strangles** (distemper) is a highly contagious disease caused by a bacteria. It is often a problem on breeding farms and primarily affects young horses. Strangles is spread through direct contact with an infected horse. No vaccine is completely effective in preventing strangles; however, there are several vaccines which reduce the incidence and the severity of the disease.

**Potomac horse fever** has been identified in Wyoming in recent years but occurs sporadically. This disease is seasonal, occurring between late spring and late fall. Typical signs include fever, depression, loss of appetite, diarrhea, colic, and dehydration. If you travel extensively with your horse, consider this vaccine.

These are the major diseases of horses in Wyoming. Some vaccinations require a booster, and the time interval of the booster varies with the vaccine and the management of the horses. Once again, it is highly recommended you work closely with your veterinarian to develop a disease-management plan for your horses.

\*Information taken from the American Horse Council's *Horse Industry Handbook* and the American Association of Equine Practitioners' "Guidelines for Vaccination of Horses."

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