

# Healthy Herds, Happy Horses

## *Key factors in equine herd health programs*

*With Manning Equine Veterinary Services*



We've all heard the saying "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure". When it comes to our horses, we can apply this philosophy in the manner of a solid herd health program.

### **The importance of a herd health program**

From a veterinary perspective, herd health programs involve routine veterinary exams, vaccinations, parasite control, and dentistry. Adjunct branches to your program should also include regular hoof care and nutritional assessments. The implementation of these maintenance programs aims to:

- U Prevent and reduce the transmission of diseases
- U Reduce health risks and promote longevity
- U Provide early detection and prevention for a variety of health issues
- U Increase efficiency through collective management

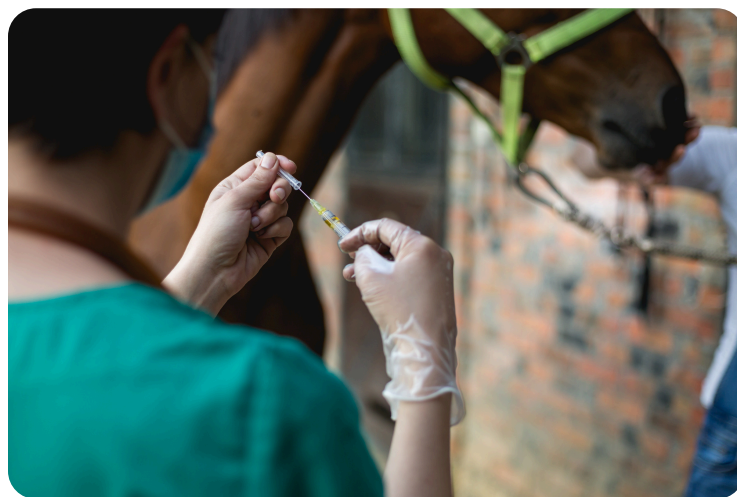
### **Things to consider when developing a herd health program**

When building your herd health program, you should take into consideration:

- 1 The size of your facility and/or herds: The recommendations for a large show facility may very well differ from that of a small, closed hobby farm.
- 2 The ages and activity levels of your horses: Each horse is an individual with their own requirements and risks.
- 3 Regional disease prevalence and requirements: Different locations, even within Ontario, can have varying occurrences of different diseases such as mosquito borne pathogens.

## Vaccination guidelines

When determining which vaccinations are best for your herd or farm you can refer to the AAEP vaccination guidelines ([aaep.org](http://aaep.org)) and speak to your regular veterinarian about what they recommend – they will be best positioned to guide you.



For Ontario, the commonly recommended vaccinations are as follows. These are broken down into **core** (recommended for all horses regardless of age, breed or lifestyle) and **risk based** (given if a population is at risk of a disease) vaccines.

<b>Rabies</b>	<b>Core Vaccine</b>	Annual vaccine
<b>Tetanus</b>	<b>Core Vaccine</b>	Annual vaccine (or, in the case of a wound or surgery, a booster is recommended if it has been more than six months since last vaccine).
<b>Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) &amp; Western Equine Encephalitis (WEE)</b>	<b>Core Vaccine</b>	Annual vaccine. Recommended to be administered in the Spring before mosquito season.
<b>West Nile Virus (WNV)</b>	<b>Core Vaccine</b>	Annual vaccine (six-month boosters may be administered to horses in high-risk areas). Recommended to be administered in the Spring before mosquito season.
<b>Equine Influenza Virus (Flu)</b>	<b>Core Vaccine</b>	Annual vaccine (or every six months if your horse is showing or at a farm where horses are travelling off property). FEI, EC and USEF have specific vaccine requirements surrounding this vaccine.
<b>Equine Herpes Virus 1 &amp; 4 (Rhino)</b>	<b>Core Vaccine</b>	Annual vaccine (or every six months if your horse is showing or at a farm where horses are travelling off property). Except in foaling mares, in which case the recommendation is to vaccinate at 5-, 7-, and 9-months gestation).
<b>Potomac Horse Fever</b>	<b>Risk Based</b>	Annual vaccine. Recommended to be administered in the Spring and may be boosted every 3-4 months in areas with high risk.
<b>Strangles</b>	<b>Risk Based</b>	Annual vaccine



## Parasite control

The practice of rotating dewormers three to four times a year is no longer recommended due to increasing parasite resistance to available dewormers. We now deworm based on individual horse needs and fecal egg counts and try to use dewormers without known resistance issues.

### General deworming guidelines



#### Foals (under one year of age)

- U Three months of age - Deworm with Fenbendazole
- U Six months of age – Perform a fecal egg count to determine the recommended dewormer, and then deworm
- U Nine months of age – Deworm with Ivermectin + Praziquantal

#### Young horses (one to four years of age)

- U Mid-April, June and August – Perform a fecal egg count and deworm based on results if needed
- U Mid-November – Deworm all horses with either Ivermectin + Praziquantal or Moxidectin + Praziquantal

#### Mature horses (Five years and older)



- U Mid-April – Fecal test all horses and deworm based on the results. Those with a low fecal count can be dewormed in the Fall. Horses with a moderate fecal count are recommended to be dewormed in April with a recheck fecal in June. If a horse has a high fecal count they are recommended to be dewormed in April and June with a recheck fecal in August.
- U Mid-November – Deworm all horses with either Ivermectin + Praziquantal or Moxidectin + Praziquantal.

## Common Vaccine Myths



### My horse doesn't go anywhere so he doesn't need vaccines

Core vaccines for all horses, including those in closed herds, should cover mosquito borne pathogens (EEE/WEE/WNV), as well as environmental (Tetanus) and wildlife transmitted (Rabies) pathogens.

### My horse has been vaccinated all her life, so she no longer needs regular vaccines

The protective level of antibodies is not well understood for many diseases in horses. Vaccines are labelled with the recommended vaccine interval, as this is what has been proven to be successful. Having been vaccinated multiple years in a row does not mean that the immunity will last longer, and older horses often have decreased immune responses.



## What is fecal testing?

Fecals test your horse's manure for eggs shed by internal parasites. This helps determine if your horse needs to be dewormed, what type of dewormer to use, and whether a dewormer has been effective.

It is recommended to avoid deworming your horse unless necessary as the overuse of available deworming products is contributing to the development of increasing resistance.



## Equine dentistry

Horses' teeth are constantly erupting (until their senior years) and grinding down as they chew. This results in the formation of sharp points that can irritate and ulcerate the cheeks and tongue. Horses need rough grinding surfaces on their teeth in order to break down feed, but they do not always wear evenly. Uneven wearing can result in abnormal chewing and restricted jaw movement.

*For young horses (under five years of age),* exams every six months are recommended to ensure all teeth are coming in properly and shedding caps appropriately. Deciduous teeth grind down and become sharp more quickly, and final deciduous teeth are shed at 4.5 years of age. This is also a good age to check for and remove wolf teeth if necessary.

*In middle-aged horses (five to fifteen years of age)* annual exams help maintain good grinding surfaces and ensure abnormalities and sharp points aren't developing that would cause mouth pain or bit issues. *For older horses (over fifteen years of age)* ensuring good grinding surface is maintained as horses age is important as horses have a finite amount of teeth and these eventually wear out.

## Get a jumpstart on planning!

A good herd health program will help protect your farm, as well as your horses' health and longevity. Your regular veterinarian will be best positioned to aid you in developing the appropriate program for your facility and horses. Reach out to them today to get a jumpstart on planning for this year!

*Manning Equine Veterinary Services provides high quality veterinary medicine and diagnostics for horses in the Southern Ontario area. [www.manningequinevet.com](http://www.manningequinevet.com)*