

Preventative Health Care

Your horse's health is important to us! The first step to overall good health is prevention. This is why we emphasize good health through preventative care. Our wellness program is aimed at keeping all aspects of your horse in good working order and includes: bi-annual physical examinations, vaccinations, parasite control programs, and dental examinations/care to help keep your horse in good health.

PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

Just like you, your horse should receive a bi-annual check up. During this examination, we examine your horse from nose to tail to check every body system for any abnormalities. In addition, we recommend a basic blood test (Complete Blood Count or "CBC") annually to evaluate your horse's health. If an abnormality is found we can then address it by performing additional diagnostic tests (in depth blood work, urine samples, diagnostic imaging). Catching a potential problem early is key in keeping your horse healthy!



VACCINATION

Vaccination is an important part of your horse's care. While it does not guarantee your horse be disease free, these simple shots, along with good management practices, greatly reduce the risk of your horse becoming ill. In addition, vaccinations are much less expensive than the treatment costs for these devastating diseases. We follow the American Association on of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) guidelines for vaccinations but tailor the vaccination protocol for each individual.



Below are the core vaccinations we offer for adults (non pregnant - watch for upcoming articles on broodmare and foal preventative care):

Tetanus: Tetanus, caused by the soiling dwelling organism *Clostridium tetani*, is a potentially fatal neurological disease. It is recommended that adult horses receive a yearly booster. If a horse is unvaccinated, a two dose series with a 4-6 week interval is required prior to annual vaccination. In addition, if a horse sustains a laceration or is to undergo surgery 6 or more months after the previous booster, vaccination a booster at the time of the injury or surgery is strongly recommended.

Encephalomyelitis: Historically named for the region of the country they were found, Eastern and Western Encephalomyelitis are included in the core

vaccination program due to the risk of disease in horses throughout the United States. Encephalomyelitis is a neurological disease caused by viruses that are transmitted by bloodsucking insects, mainly mosquitoes. It is recommended that adult horses receive vaccination twice annually (in the spring before insects become prevalent and then boosted in the fall). If a horse is unvaccinated, a two dose series with a 4-6 week interval is required prior to bi-annual vaccination.

West Nile Virus: West Nile Virus is another potentially fatal neurological disease that is transmitted to the horse by infected mosquitoes. Mosquitoes become infected after feeding on an infected bird (reservoirs of this virus). This year (2012) has shown a sharp increase in disease occurrence in the horse population throughout the Midwest making boosting this vaccine very important this fall. In addition to pest control, it is recommended that adult horses receive vaccination twice annually (in the spring before insects become prevalent and then boosted in the fall). If a horse is unvaccinated, a two dose series with a 4-6 week interval is required prior to bi-annual vaccination.

Rabies: Rabies is a fatal neurological disease caused by a virus that has the ability to affect a wide variety of species. Humans, too, are at risk of contracting this disease when handling infected animals. Thus, it is an important disease to prevent. It is recommended that adult horses receive an annual vaccination. If a horse is unvaccinated, one dose is required before annual vaccination.

In addition, below are common diseases that are vaccinated for due to the increased risk in our area:

Rhinopneumonitis: Or Rhino is a respiratory disease caused by the Equine Herpes Virus-4, and to a lesser extent, EHV-1 strains. Other strains of this herpes virus can cause abortion in mares or neurologic disease. To date, rhino vaccinations do not effectively protect against the neurological form of this disease. Spring and fall boosters are recommended. It is recommended that adult horses receive vaccination twice annually. If a horse is unvaccinated, a three dose series with a 4-6 week interval in between each dose is required prior to bi-annual vaccination.

Influenza: Equine Influenza is a highly contagious airborne respiratory virus that affects horses all over the world. This disease can quickly spread through a boarding barn causing much havoc. It is recommended that adult horses receive vaccination twice annually. If a horse is unvaccinated, a two dose series with a 4-6 week interval is required prior to bi-annual vaccination. In addition, more frequent vaccination may be required for performance horses that are travelling frequently.

Potomac Horse Fever: Equine Monocytic Ehrlichiosis is a disease caused by a rickettsial organism caused by ingestion of infected insects. These insects are most often attracted to stagnant water sources, making good management (eliminate standing water sources, keep insect attracting lights off at night, etc) practices essential. Once infected, horses exhibit a wide variety of clinical signs. The most common presentation of this disease is severe colitis with diarrhea. In addition, laminitis often occurs during the disease process. It is recommended that adult horses receive vaccination twice annually. If a horse is unvaccinated, a two dose series with a 3-4 week interval is required prior to bi-annual vaccination. In addition, more frequent vaccination may be required for performance horses that are travelling frequently.

Strangles: Caused by the bacteria *Streptococcus equi*, Strangles is a highly contagious disease that commonly affects young horses. Vaccination against this disease is recommended on farms where strangles is a persistent problem or if the risk of exposure is high (farms with a large volume of traffic – sales barns etc). Horses that have been previously infected can then go on to shed the organism without showing signs of disease (also known as silent carriers). Once infected, horses often have swelling of lymph nodes under the jaw which can then lead to respiratory distress. In addition, infected horses can develop a severe vasculitis, purpura hemorrhagica, which causes limb swelling and possible hemorrhage. This condition can also occur with vaccination as well. Therefore, we recommend this vaccine only be given if the risk of contracting this disease is great.

PARASITE CONTROL

Many horses struggle with internal parasite burdens. These small organisms rob your horse of important nutrients and can cause serious, sometimes fatal, problems.



In order to identify (and subsequently treat) the organisms, we rely on a fecal egg count (microscopic examination of fresh manure for parasite eggs). This simple test allows us to determine which parasites are present and in what amount. Using this information, we can then develop a deworming program for your horse and monitor its effectiveness. It is important to remember that a negative fecal examination does not mean the horse is parasite free. For example, tapeworm eggs are often missed with routine fecal egg count techniques. Fecal egg count results are most useful when several horses on a farm are tested at once. This information gives great information about the level of parasite infection on the property and how best to treat this infection.

In addition to deworming, we also stress the importance of good management techniques to keep parasite transfer to a minimum. Several ways



to lower the transfer of parasite include: prevent overcrowding of pastures, regular disposal of manure both inside and outside of the barn, compost manure instead of spread it, keep age groups separated to prevent exposure, and consider pasture rotation. With good management and strategic deworming, you can help decrease the parasite burden within your horse effectively.

DENTAL CARE

A horse's teeth continue to grow throughout its lifetime. The horse's own chewing motion (in a "figure of 8" style) results in the formation of sharp points on the teeth in very specific areas. These points can then cause lacerations and ulceration on the cheek and tongue leading to decreased feed consumption and deterioration of health. We recommend regular dental examinations to monitor these points and the overall health of the mouth. Once the points become problematic, it is important to correct them by "floating" (filing) the teeth. We offer power floatation (done under sedation) for quick, effective removal of these points as needed.

We care about the health of your horse and believe in the power of prevention! Please call today to schedule a preventative health care screen!

Have a great day!!

Sincerely

Abby Reising, DVM