

EQUINE PREVENTATIVE CARE | VET RESOURCES

# EQUINE HERPES

## WHAT TYPES OF DISEASE DOES HERPES CAUSE IN HORSES?

Equine herpesvirus (EHV), is a contagious viral infection which can cause respiratory disease, neurological disease and abortion.<sup>1</sup>

There are two different types of EHV that cause disease in horses:

**EHV 1:** This strain is less common, but can be severe in its effects, causing abortion and neurological disease<sup>1</sup>

**EHV 4:** This strain is very common and causes respiratory disease<sup>1</sup>

## HOW DOES A HORSE DEVELOP THE EQUINE HERPES VIRUS?

Herpes is a contagious, viral disease and can be transmitted in various ways:

1. Horses breathe in the virus from infected horses – shedding via the respiratory system can last for 7 to 10 days<sup>2</sup>
2. The virus can be spread indirectly by contamination of people or equipment with bodily fluids, such as nasal secretions from infected living animals or placental fluids from an aborted fetus.<sup>2</sup>

## HOW AND WHEN SHOULD I VACCINATE MY HORSE FOR HERPES?

Your vet can vaccinate your horse against equine herpes with Duvaxyn<sup>®</sup> EHV 1,4 available from your vet.

Horses can be vaccinated from five months of age, followed by a second injection of Duvaxyn EHV 1,4 after an interval of 4-6 weeks. However, if the horse is at high risk of infection, for example, when a foal has consumed insufficient colostrum or there is risk of early exposure to field infections with EHV 1 or EHV 4, an earlier vaccination may be given<sup>4</sup>. In these circumstances the foal should receive a single dose of Duvaxyn EHV 1,4 from 3 months of age, followed by the above mentioned full primary vaccination course.

Consult your veterinarian if you are unsure of your foal's risk profile.

## HOW OFTEN DOES THE VACCINE NEED TO BE GIVEN?



1ST DOSE

4-6 weeks



2ND DOSE

6 months



BIANNUAL BOOSTER

(to protect against respiratory disease)

At 5 months of age. An extra dose may given at 3 months of age if foal is at high risk of infection.

Breeding mares should receive doses at 5, 7 and 9 months of pregnancy. It's important to note that you should not vaccinate sick animals.<sup>5</sup>

## IS HERPES IN HORSES THE SAME AS HERPES IN HUMANS?

Herpes viruses are a large family of viruses. Most mammalian species are susceptible to at least one type of herpes virus. Fortunately, this type of virus is very species-specific, meaning that humans do not catch equine herpes virus, and vice versa.<sup>3</sup>

## WHAT IS THE COST OF THE VACCINE?

Pricing will vary between veterinarians and will depend on the number of horses being vaccinated and the location.

## WHAT PREVENTATIVE MEASURES SHOULD I TAKE TO PREVENT THE HERPES VIRUS?

Good yard management, in particular when dealing with potentially infected horses, is key to the control of the disease. Reducing the potential stresses that set off disease spread is important, as well as reducing issues such as overcrowding. Horses that are sick must be isolated.<sup>1</sup>

However, this is not the whole answer. Vaccination must play a pivotal role. Vaccinating your horse will help prevent the disease and, consequently will also help reduce the amount of infective virus that is shed to other in-contact horses.<sup>1</sup>

## HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE VACCINE IN PREVENTING THE HERPES VIRUS?

Vaccination reduces the clinical signs of respiratory diseases caused by both strains of the virus, EHV 1 and EHV 4. It also helps to control EHV 1 abortion when used in conjunction with appropriate management practices, as advised by your vet. The vaccine does not completely prevent your horse from contracting herpes infections, but works to reduce its impact.<sup>6</sup>

## DOES A VET HAVE ADMINISTER THE VACCINATION?

Equine herpes vaccinations are to be administered by or under the direct supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon.<sup>5</sup>

## HOW DO I MINIMISE THE RISK OF THE HERPES VIRUS?

- If your horse has been diagnosed with herpes, ensure your horse is isolated for about 28 days, or as long as your vet recommends<sup>2</sup>
- Always wash your hands after touching an infected horse<sup>2</sup>
- Don't share equipment among your horses<sup>2</sup>
- If an abortion has occurred, ensure you don't spread the virus via your hands or equipment – remember that the virus is found in the aborted animal and in fluids and tissue such as the placenta, as well as via the respiratory system of the mare<sup>2</sup>



**SEE YOUR VET AND VACCINATE TODAY**

Visit [www.health4horses.com.au](http://www.health4horses.com.au) for more information on equine herpes

1. My Healthy Horse, A guide to vaccination, Pfizer Animal Health UK AH064/11  
2. Queensland Horse Council Inc. Equine Herpes Virus Fact Sheet, March 2009  
3. PetMD. (2012). Equine Herpes Virus. Retrieved from [http://www.petmd.com/horse/conditions/reproductive/c\\_hr\\_equine\\_herpes\\_virus](http://www.petmd.com/horse/conditions/reproductive/c_hr_equine_herpes_virus)  
4. Duvaxyn EHV 1.4. (n.d.). Retrieved from The Vet Shed

<http://www.thevetshed.com.au/buy/duvaxyn-ehv-1.4/DUVA>  
5. Product label for Duvaxyn EHV 1.4. Accessed from APVMA website November 2016.  
6. Zoetis Australia Pty Ltd. (2013, October 9). Risk of EHV. Retrieved from Health4Horses: <http://www.thevetshed.com.au/buy/duvaxyn-ehv-1.4/DUVA>