

WHY SHOULD HORSES BE VACCINATED AGAINST EQUINE INFLUENZA EVERY 6 MONTHS?

All the vaccine manufacturers provide data in their package inserts which states that the vaccine will protect infected horses “from clinical signs” for a period of 1 year. Most equestrian sporting bodies require horses to be vaccinated every 6 months.

The difference in times relates to the duration of immunity providing “protection against infection” versus “protection from clinical signs”. As you approach the latter months leading up to a year after EI vaccination, a horse can be infected with EI but show no clinical signs (i.e. it may be a Trojan Horse that can unwittingly be shedding virus at events). Therefore, responsible equestrian sporting bodies require that horses are vaccinated every 6 months and thereby ensure that the vast majority of the horses that are competing are “protected from infection”. This reduces the chances of subclinical EI being transmitted at events.

It is a fact of life that a large proportion of horses that do not compete in events but remain at home are not vaccinated. Therefore, if there was sub-clinical infection of horses protected from clinical signs at shows and this was then taken “home” it has the potential to result in explosive outbreaks which would be blamed on the sporting body that organised the event. Furthermore, these sporting bodies derive their income from such events and such an outbreak would result in cancellation of events with a direct effect on the income of these sporting bodies.