

American Association of Equine Practitioners' (AAEP) Vaccination Guidelines

While it might seem like an easy way to save money on horse care, skipping vaccination might mean the difference between life and death for a horse. The majority of vaccines on the market are highly effective, and although no vaccine can assure 100% prevention of a particular disease, they can significantly reduce the risk of disease or clinical signs, many of which can be fatal in the unvaccinated horse. In other words, it's typically significantly less expensive to vaccinate a horse regularly than it is to treat him for a disease he contracts because he wasn't immunized.

Veterinarians are continually educated on any new or emerging diseases and will have the best idea on which particular vaccines are and aren't necessary for your horse based on region, environmental factors, and risk of exposure to diseases.

Horse owners can consult the American Association of Equine Practitioners' (AAEP) vaccination guidelines (available at aaep.org/info/vaccination-guidelines) when planning vaccination protocols with their veterinarians. These guidelines include both "core" and "risk-based" vaccines.

Core vaccinations protect against diseases that are endemic to a region, those with potential public health significance, required by law, virulent/highly infectious, and/or those posing a risk of severe disease. Core vaccines have clearly demonstrated efficacy and safety, and thus exhibit a high enough level of patient benefit and low enough level of risk to justify their use in all equids.

The AAEP's core vaccines include Eastern/Western equine encephalomyelitis (EEE/WEE), rabies, tetanus, and West Nile virus (WNV), and it is recommended that all horses should have these on board.

Meanwhile, "risk-based vaccinations are those having applications which may vary between individuals, populations, and geographic regions," the guideline authors write. "Risk assessment should be performed by, or in consultation with, a licensed veterinarian to identify which vaccines are appropriate for a given horse or population of horses."

The AAEP classifies anthrax, botulism, equine herpesvirus-1 and -4 (EHV-1), equine viral arteritis (EVA), equine influenza, Potomac horse fever, rotavirus, and strangles vaccines as risk-based options.

Information from The Horse magazine article; Vaccines for all Ages by Erica Larson