

MOUNT VERNON
VETERINARY
HOSPITAL, INC., P.S.

The 2008 recommendations for Rabies vaccination in horses

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The American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP), working in combination with the Center for Disease Control (CDC), has recently revised its recommendations for horse vaccinations and made Rabies a core vaccination along with Eastern and Western Encephalomyelitis, West Nile Virus, Tetanus, Influenza and Rhinopneumonitis. The AAEP vaccination committee is made up of experienced equine veterinarians and infectious disease specialists from around the country that are on the cutting edge of disease control research.

Rabies is a viral disease that, once contracted, is not curable. It is also a zoonotic disease meaning that people can catch it from any infected animal. Because of these two points most veterinarians are vaccinated against rabies during veterinary school. Rabies is also a reportable disease meaning that all cases are reported to a government agency that keeps track of the number and distribution of cases in order to prevent outbreaks. Rabies can be carried by skunks, foxes, and bats and from there can spread to our domestic animals through infected bodily fluids. Here in the pristine Northwest we rarely have to worry about many of the diseases that concern horsemen in other parts of the country, however, we do have endemic bat rabies, and the last few years the number of rabies positive bats has dramatically increased. Despite the AAEP's change in policy, rabies is still a rare occurrence in horses.

Signs of rabies in horses can vary from mild colic signs to depression and sleepiness. Rarely do horses get the furious water-avoiding form of rabies made famous by books like "Cujo." The vaccine that is labeled for horses has been shown to be safe in horses and foals older than 3 months of age and pregnant mares. This product is only available from a licensed veterinarian. Horses in other parts of the country have been vaccinated against rabies since the development of the vaccine years ago. Horses that are at high risk of exposure are those that travel out of Western Washington or those that have any contact with bats. Work with your veterinarian to design the appropriate vaccination protocol for your horses.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact us or your regular veterinarian.

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