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## Vaccination Guidelines – Developing a Vaccination Plan

Mark Russell, Assistant Professor - Equine

A vaccination plan is an essential part of horse ownership. Disease prevention should be considered by every horse owner, regardless of whether the horse(s) leave home at any time. The following is some useful information to consider.

A “standard” vaccination program for all horses does not exist. Each individual situation requires evaluation based on the following criteria:

- Risk of disease (anticipated exposure, environmental factors, geographic factors, age, breed, use and sex of the horse).
- Consequences of the disease (morbidity/mortality, zoonotic potential).
- Anticipated effectiveness of the selected product(s).
- Potential for adverse reactions to a vaccine(s).
- Cost of immunization (time, labor and vaccine costs) vs. potential cost of disease (time out of competition; impact of movement restrictions imposed in order to control an outbreak of contagious disease; labor and medication if, or when, horses develop clinical disease and require treatment; or loss of life).

As a horse owner, your best bet is to contact your local veterinarian and discuss what type of program is the most suitable for your horse. The above list details factors that can affect the individual situation

of your horse. Planning ahead of time with a viable list of considerations is important to the success of protecting your horse.

Keep in mind that the use of antibody titers or other immunological measurements to determine if a booster vaccination is warranted is not currently practiced in the horse as standardized tests, and protective levels of immunity have not been defined in most cases. A correlation between antibody levels and protective immunity under field conditions has not yet been identified.

Horse owners should have realistic expectations and understand that:

- Vaccination alone, in the absence of good management practices directed at infection control, is not sufficient for the prevention of infectious disease.
- Vaccination serves to minimize the risks of infection but cannot prevent disease in all circumstances.
- The primary series of vaccines and booster doses should be appropriately administered prior to likely exposure.
- Each horse in a population is not protected to an equal degree nor for an equal duration following vaccination.
- Protection is not immediately afforded the patient after administration of a vaccine that is designed to induce active immunity. In most instances, a priming series of multiple doses of a vaccine must be administered initially for that vaccine to induce protective active immunity.

- All horses in a herd should be vaccinated at intervals based on the professional opinion of the attending veterinarian.

Ideally, the same schedule is followed for all horses in a population, thus simplifying record keeping, minimizing replication and transmission of infectious agents in a herd and indirectly protecting those horses in the herd that responded poorly to vaccination, thereby optimizing herd immunity.

- A properly administered, licensed product should not be assumed to provide complete protection during any given field epidemic.

- Although rare, there is potential for adverse reactions despite appropriate handling and administration of vaccines.

With proper management practices and planning ahead, the horse owner can better position himself for success. The AAEP suggests the following vaccinations for adult horses. (Many of these can vary depending on history of vaccination and if broodmare. Please consult with your local veterinarian.)

- Anthrax – annual. Not recommended during gestation for broodmares and should not be administered concurrently with antibiotics.

- Botulism – annual.
- Equine Herpesvirus (EHV) – annual.
- Influenza – Horse with ongoing risk of exposure: semiannual. Horses at low risk of exposure: annual.
- Potomac Horse Fever – semiannual to annual.
- Rotavirus (Broodmares) – three-dose series. First dose at 8 months gestation; second and third doses at 4-week intervals thereafter.
- Tetanus
- Rabies
- West Nile

*Special thanks to The American Association of Equine Practitioners for their knowledge, expertise and willingness to contribute.*

## 4-H State Roping Results

Mark Russell, Assistant Professor - Equine

The 4-H State Roping took place in Benton on June 1. We had great turnout of kids from all over the state. Here is a breakdown of the all-around winners.

Myles Neighbors, Senior Boy High Point  
Jaycee Newcomb, Senior Girl High Point

Brody Smith, Junior Boy High Point  
Aubree Ford, Junior Girl High Point

## Tips and Advice for Choosing a Bit When Breaking a Horse

Mark Russell, Assistant Professor - Equine

A horse's lifelong usefulness is often dependent upon the foundation built by his first teacher. Well-trained and successful horses generally had a solid start as a young horse.

Groundwork is one common method of starting young horses. It teaches horses as early as long yearlings to learn to give to pressure and be responsive to signals and cues such as turning, moving forward and stopping before a person ever swings a leg across their back.

I start young horses in a round pen setting and require that the colts learn to move off my body language in the round pen, from moving forward to stopping and facing me. I also flag or sack out my colts as part of my groundwork regime.

Sacking out or flagging horses works by desensitizing them to the stimulus, the flag or sack (a tactile response) as well as the noise (an auditory response) that's created when the horse is being flagged or sacked out. By desensitizing the horse to a stimulus, I ultimately decrease the response, decreasing the horse's likeliness to move away or flee. After the horse has learned not to move in response to the flag or sack, saddling can begin.

Prior to saddling, I spend a great deal of time ground driving the colts. In my opinion, this helps get the horses broke on the ground and teaches them to respond to commands before they ever carry a rider.

Before getting on a horse for the first time, I make sure he can flex in

both directions, meaning he can willingly bend from side to side with little or no resistance.

I prefer to start all of my horses with a snaffle bit. It helps to bridle yearlings so they can learn to carry the bridle. The horses learn to carry the bridle in a controlled environment, such as a round pen or the comfort of their stall, without reins. This procedure is done in short bouts of time. Groundwork and driving in a snaffle ideally puts the buttons on the horse from day one.

A snaffle is a bit that has rings on the side (O-ring, D-ring, egg butt, half-cheek or full) and may have a broken (broken in the middle or broken in multiple places) or solid mouthpiece, according to the University of Georgia Cooperative

Extension Bulletin. A snaffle does not have shanks, even though many catalogs, and even some people, refer to curb bits with broken mouthpieces as snaffles.

A snaffle works by placing direct pressure on the horse's mouth in various areas including the tongue, bars, cheeks, lips and palate. A snaffle bit helps teach and assist young horses to lead with their nose, then a bosal is used after they are responsive to a snaffle. The snaffle helps create self-carriage, softness and lateral flexion. Ultimately, if the training is done correctly, then the horse will learn to work off the person's legs versus just relying on the bit and your hands.

A snaffle compared to a bosal would be a more appropriate choice for a greener or less experienced rider as it applies direct pressure and provides the ability to point the horse's nose more easily. A horse

may need to graduate from a snaffle, though. You are limited in how long you can use the snaffle, and you can't expect a finished horse to perform adequately with a snaffle because he will not be able to elevate his spine and round his back carrying a snaffle. And a snaffle can easily be pulled through the side of a horse's mouth if he is not responsive and does not have a proper curb strap.

I generally step my horses up to a bosal, a form of a hackamore, when they are ready. The bosal is generally used after a snaffle and before a curb bit. Other hackamore bits are the sidepull and the mechanical hackamore, which employs more leverage than direct pressure, according to the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Bulletin. The bosal works by placing pressure on the bridge of the nose and under the mandible or jaw.

I will transition my horses from a snaffle to the bosal when they are soft in the rib cage and responsive. A bosal is a good tool for helping pick up the horse's back as well as freeing up its front end so it's forced to better utilize its hindquarters when moving. One disadvantage to the bosal is the fact that if you go to turn with a bosal, it doesn't allow for the same freedom or a free turn due to different pressure points when compared to the snaffle. The response is not the same or as natural.

So, ideally, when changing from the snaffle to the bosal, the horse should be sensitized to pressure, meaning the rider can apply less and less pressure and the horse responds quicker and more readily to stimulus (or cues).

In closing, do a lot of ground-work first, seek out advice from other horsemen and professionals and don't rush the training process.