

FEBRUARY EQUINE NEWSLETTER



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PROTECTING YOUR HORSES DURING FLU SEASON



3 Tips to Protect Your Horse During Flu Season

Coronavirus has dominated the headlines, but equine influenza virus (EIV) makes news of its own this time of year. Horses are in the midst of equine flu season, which extends from December through April, according to data from the Equine Respiratory Biosurveillance Program.¹ To protect your horse from EIV now—and any time of year—keep these tips in mind.

1. Rethink your horse's EIV risk

The number of horses infected with EIV has been trending upward since 2008, according to data from the Biosurveillance Program.¹ Veterinarians recommend including EIV in a horse's vaccination program based on the diseases circulating in the horse's area and on the horse's lifestyle. When thinking about your horse's EIV risk, remember that:

- EIV spread occurs with or without travel. Even horses who don't leave the farm are at risk of EIV, particularly if other horses come and go.
- EIV affects both young and old horses.

2. Time vaccines for flu season

With equine flu season lasting from December to April, your horse could benefit much more from receiving the spring EIV vaccine in February or March. In addition to timing, the number of vaccinations given also plays an important role in protecting horses. The American Association of Equine Practitioners [vaccination guidelines](#) recommend horses at increased risk of EIV receive a booster vaccination every six months. Ongoing data from the Biosurveillance Program shows many horses are under-vaccinated, receiving just one EIV vaccination per year (or less).²

3. Stay on top of an evolving virus

Equine flu changes like human flu does; although, at a much slower rate. This is referred to as *antigenic drift*.

Therefore, it's critical to use a vaccine that's updated to account for the most recent flu strains. Ongoing monitoring shows Florida '13 is the strain closest to the EIV currently circulating in our horses.³ PRESTIGE® inactivated influenza-containing vaccines from Merck Animal Health are the only EIV vaccines that include the Florida '13 strain. Learn more about the [PRESTIGE® line of vaccines](#). With these tips, you'll go a long way in helping make sure your horse stays protected this flu season. By remembering the EIV risks and choosing an EIV vaccine that has changed along with the virus, you'll help keep equine flu away all year round.

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¹ Vaala W, Barnett DC, James K, Chappell D, Craig B, Gaughan E, Bain F, Barnum SM, Pusterla N. Prevalence Factors Associated with Equine Influenza Virus Infection in Equids with Upper Respiratory Tract Infection from 2008 to 2019. *AAEP Proceedings*. 2019 Vol 65.

² Merck Animal Health and University of California, Davis School of Veterinary Medicine (Nicola Pusterla). Infectious Upper Respiratory Disease Surveillance Program. Ongoing research 2008-present.

³ Data on file, Merck Animal Health 2020.

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