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July 2018 Newsletter

We Want Protection!

Vaccinations. We know we need to vaccinate, but do we truly know what we are vaccinating for? Do we know WHY we vaccinate? Why do we have to vaccinate our animals so often? Hopefully we will answer a few of those questions here.

Core vaccines. These are the vaccines that are given because a horse can get the disease just by being a horse. Here in Texas, core vaccines are those that protect against Eastern and Western Encephalitis, Tetanus, West Nile, and Rabies. As most people know, Eastern and Western Encephalitis and West Nile are the diseases passed by mosquitoes. Most people know that Tetanus comes from open wounds, but what most people DON'T know is that it also lives in your soil, so if a horse ingests the bacteria that causes Tetanus, it can also display symptoms. And almost everyone knows Rabies is passed through bite wounds from another infected animal.

Risk-based vaccines. These are the vaccines that protect against diseases that only SOME horses might be exposed to. The big ones here in Texas we worry about are Equine Influenza and Equine Herpesvirus (otherwise known as Rhinovirus). These vaccines are given to horses that are travelling or have stablemates who are travelling. These viruses are passed through contact with other horses, and if you think about it, is very similar to how humans get the flu. Other areas of the country vaccinate for Botulism, Potomac Horse Fever, Strangles, Equine Viral Arteritis, and several other diseases.

Exposure. The reason we vaccinate horses every year is due to the amount of exposure they have to these diseases. Horses, by nature, live outside for most of their lives, and as a result are constantly exposed to mosquitoes carry disease. As we've all seen, even a horse in a padded stall can cut itself on something, so we need to keep their Tetanus shot up to date. And by nature, horses are curious animals and would most likely investigate a skunk or racoon that came into their pasture, not knowing that it might be dangerous.

Titers. This question is asked a lot. Rather than vaccinating, people want to pull titers to see if they need to vaccinate. Here is the problem: nobody has established what a protective titer is in the horse. In humans, an adequate titer for Rabies is 0.3 units of antibodies per milliliter of serum. We don't know what is considered adequate in horses for any of the diseases. So even though your horse may show that it has antibodies to a certain disease, we don't know if that's enough antibodies to actually prevent it.

The bottom line is this: we need to vaccinate our horses, whether you as the owner of the horse or the veterinarian vaccinates. No vaccine is guaranteed 100%, and some only reduce the severity of the disease. However, the benefit of having your veterinarian give your vaccines is that your company that

manufactures them will back you up. So, if you had your veterinarian vaccinate your horse for West Nile, and your horse comes down with it, the manufacturer will pay for the treatment of your horse. But they only do this if your veterinarian vaccinates them due to the need of proof of vaccination.

Castration Signs: Too Hot!!!!