

Merck Equine Influenza Webinar Transcript

Hi, I'm Bryant Craig, an equine technical services veterinarian with Merck Animal Health. Today we are going to talk about vaccinations, and three topics I'd like to cover are immunology, vaccination protocols and then take a deeper look at equine influenza and some of the changes that have occurred and how it's affecting our equine population.

IMMUNOLOGY

When discussing vaccination and immunology with your clients, it's important to emphasize that the first thing we look for in a vaccine is safety. And secondly we are looking for efficacious products.

One way that Merck provides this is through our exclusive Havlogen adjuvant, which maintains suspension of the antigen in the product and provides a reliable, long-lasting response from the vaccine.

It's merely a boost for that antigen in our vaccine, so it's providing a superior immune response over what we would get if we were to just administer the antigens by themselves.

To explain these points to the horse owner, I would just say that the Merck vaccine line provides a cleaner product that lasts longer through a filtration process that removes material that is formed during the manufacturing process and an adjuvant that produces a longer lasting immune response.

PROTOCOLS

When talking about vaccinations, we want to keep in mind that all protocols aren't going to be "cookie cutter" for every horse. That's the reason we have the at-risk and the core antigens. We can tailor those vaccination programs to that horse's individual needs or that farm's individual needs based upon their occupation, location, or herd density.

We can show a degree of compassion for owners and their animals, as well as provide a better service and better protection to that horse herd.

INFLUENZA

There's a lot of buzz in the marketplace today about equine influenza, some of the regulations that have changed in regard to vaccination, and also the population of horses being affected by equine influenza.

For nearly a decade, Merck has been conducting a biosurveillance program monitoring respiratory disease across the United States.

When we look at the data from the influenza infections, we see young horses as well as older horses being affected. In the past, influenza has been regarded as mostly a young horse disease. But now we are seeing those eight to 10, and even teenage horses, becoming more and more affected.

One thing we need to keep in mind is that a vaccination program for influenza is the most economical and effective way at controlling that influenza infection. Keeping those older horses on a regular vaccination schedule is paramount to controlling this disease.

When discussing these changes in the flu virus to our owners, we may need to keep in mind that some of our protocols need to be adjusted. For example, that horse that attends two to three events a year versus that horse whose occupation is traveling and going to shows 12 months a year may need the same type of vaccination protocol as we see this antigenic drift occur and the older population becoming more affected with equine influenza.

FLUAVERT

We know the goal of vaccination is mimicking the natural infective process of that virus. For example, with flu, one way to accomplish this is with FluAvert, our modified live, intranasal influenza vaccine. By administering this product where that virus gains entry, we not only get a great mucosal response, but through its natural replication we also get a humoral and cell-mediated response. So we get help through all three arms of the horse's immune system.

TALKING WITH CLIENTS

So when discussing vaccination with your clients, we want to remind them that vaccination is still the most efficacious and economical way of preventing disease in the horse when coupled with a good biosecurity program. And we can tailor those vaccination programs to meet the individual needs of that horse or herd that we're protecting. ♦

Editor's note: "Health Matters: To You, Your Clients, and Your Business" is a new section on EquiManagement.com sponsored by Merck Animal Health where you can find this video as well as downloadable/printable infographics, client information documents and supporting materials on equine influenza and other topics that will be covered in the months to come. The next video topic is biosecurity, with Fairfield Bain, DVM, MBA, Diplomate ACVIM, ACVP, ACVECC. Make sure to check back on EquiManagement.com/HealthMatters often to see what new educational videos and supporting materials have been added.