



## An Owner's Guide to EQUINE HERPES VIRUS (EHV)

### What is it ?

EHV is an infectious virus affecting horses that can cause three main types of disease depending on the strain. The respiratory form is most common and affects the lungs of horses causing varying degrees of harsh coughing to mildly poor performance. There is another form which can cause abortions, stillbirths and weak foals plus a rare third form which causes serious neurological signs and affects the brain making the horses very unsteady on their feet.

### Is my horse vaccinated ?

The normal "Flu and Tetanus" vaccine (Duvaxyn IET plus or IE plus) that the majority of you will use does not cover EHV. The "flu" part of the normal vaccine is for the respiratory virus, Equine Influenza Virus, and is NOT a general vaccine against respiratory organisms.

### How is it spread ?

The virus spreads by inhalation of infected droplets from the nose and mouth or by the ingestion of material contaminated by discharge from the horse's nose. Clothing and tack could also be potential carriers of the virus if working around an infected animal.

### What are carrier animals ?

Once infected, some animals may stop showing clinical signs of the disease but may in fact have some virus hidden away in their body. This virus will not normally cause the animal a problem, but when the animal is stressed i.e.. during transport or at a show, the horse may excrete virus from its nose once again and prove an infection risk to other animals.

### Is my horse at risk ?

Risk periods are when groups of horses meet, especially young horses less than three years old. Therefore it is a particular problem in the flat racing world but also a significant issue with eventing horses. Pony club meetings and local shows are also potential occasions when animals may come into contact with the disease.

### What signs will I see if my horse is infected ?

Approximately one to three weeks after you have been to, or other horses in your yard have been to, an event or show the following signs are most likely to be shown. The respiratory form varies greatly in severity from a mild cough or reduction in normal performance, to a large amount of discharge from the nose and a high temperature.

### What about the recent fatal outbreaks ?

There have been reports of a nasty neurological strain affecting the horses' brains and actually causing the animals to die in the south east of England. This is an extremely rare form of the disease and, although we should remain vigilant for any neurological signs such as wobbliness on hind legs (ataxia), there should not be any panic or over-reaction. The cases were isolated and the areas disinfected, and no further outbreaks have been reported in the meantime.

### How can I vaccinate my horse ?

Below is a suitable vaccination course available for protection against EHV.

#### PRIMARY COURSE FOR EQUINE HERPES VIRUS

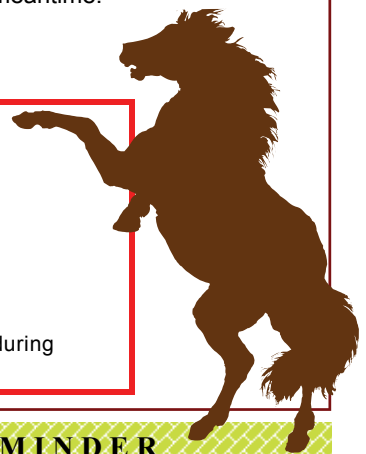
1<sup>st</sup> Duvaxyn EHV1,4 after 5 months old

2<sup>nd</sup> Duvaxyn EHV 1,4 within 4-6 weeks

#### BOOSTER

Single vaccination every 6 months

To prevent abortion due to EHV-1, the pregnant mare should be vaccinated during the 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy.



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#### PASSPORT REMINDER

All horses, ponies and donkeys must have a passport by the end of this year

*(see our Equine Newsletter of April 2003).*

If you don't already have a passport, then phone **01491 651479** and one of our vets will give you advice on the best way to acquire one.