

Port Perry Vet Services

June 2018

What's New at the Clinic?

We are excited to welcome a new veterinarian to the practice! Dr. Brad McLaughlin is a recent graduate of the Ontario Veterinary College. Brad enjoys working with all large animal species but is particularly interested in food animal medicine, surgery and consulting. Brad lives with his family on their farm and spends much of his spare time caring for the variety of animals that live there.

Over the next few months we will be hosting final year veterinary students as part of their externship program. We truly appreciate your contribution to their education by offering them words of wisdom and for allowing them to observe us working with your animals and practice their clinical skills while at your farms. Welcome to Ashley, Song, Marissa, and Alyssa, we hope you have a great summer with us!

We are a bit behind sharing this, but a few months ago we got a new ultrasound machine for bovine reproduction. You'll notice Dr. Rachel Busato using it while she is on farm performing herd health visits.

Changes for Rabies Immunization Requirements of Animals in Ontario

What changes are in place?

Beginning July 1, 2018, all health units in the province of Ontario will have the same requirements for rabies immunization in animals and livestock. This change is to ensure consistent public health rabies prevention and control policies by health units, in line with current Ontario Public Health Standards.

What livestock need to be immunized against rabies?

Livestock that are accessible for contact and handling by members of the public. Such livestock include those at: petting zoos, interactive animal experience events, as well as therapy animals, service animals, and horses in riding schools.

What livestock do not need to be immunized against rabies?

Livestock in settings that may occasionally be accessible to the public (i.e. boarding stables) also require vaccination. Animals used in public fairs and 4-H events (clubs, clinics, and shows), do not require rabies immunizations as long as they are not going to come into direct contact with the public through activities such as feeding or petting. Efforts should be made (i.e. signs, barriers) to prevent public access to livestock at such events not intended to be accessible to the public. Livestock interacting with only those persons charged with their care do not need to be vaccinated. As such, livestock on community pasture, or living outdoors on pasture, do not require vaccination, and persons trespassing on such pastures do not constitute public members per rabies prevention policy.

Who is responsible for livestock rabies immunization, and enforcing immunization requirements?

Those individuals who own and care for livestock have the task of complying with immunization standards. In Ontario, individual livestock rabies vaccination costs less than \$25.00. Vaccine administration must be performed per label instructions established by the vaccine product manufacturer. Rabies vaccinations must be administered by a licensed veterinarian.

Rule enforcement of immunization requirements can only be performed by persons such as public health inspectors and municipal by-law officers stipulated by the Provincial Offenses Act. Health units and municipalities may ensure compliance in public settings like petting zoos and interactive exhibits. Cases of animals biting humans are the usual prompt for the enforcement of immunization regulations. Suspected animal contact with a potentially rabid animal should be reported to a veterinarian.

Equine Vaccinations - When, What and Why?

Annual vaccinations are an important part of preventative care for your horse. These vaccines use killed or attenuated live (significantly weakened) agents to stimulate the animal's immune system to respond to specific viruses or bacteria. This can help prevent your horse from contracting some serious diseases, many of which are difficult, and sometimes impossible to treat.

Horses should receive their first set of vaccines at 4-6 months of age. At this time they will start to be weaned and will no longer be receiving protective antibodies from their dam. They should be re-vaccinated approximately 4 weeks later. Boosters are important for all horses being vaccinated for the first time, or with unknown vaccination histories. Most vaccinations are then repeated on a yearly schedule. Broodmares should stay on a regular vaccination schedule and should receive a booster approximately 4 weeks before they are due to foal to ensure their colostrum provides the foal with protection against a number of diseases.

The "core" or required vaccines for all horses protect them against Eastern and Western Equine Encephalomyelitis (EEE/WEE), Tetanus, West Nile Virus and Rabies.

EEE/WEE and West Nile are viruses that are transmitted by mosquitoes, with a rising number of cases being diagnosed in Canada in recent years.

Since it is impossible to rid the environment of mosquitoes, vaccination is important to protect horses from these potentially deadly viruses.

Horses are especially susceptible to tetanus, a bacteria that lives in the soil and manure. They can become infected through injuries sustained close to the ground and from penetrating foreign materials such as old nails. Often treatment is unsuccessful once the animal begins showing clinical signs of the disease.

Rabies is rare in horses, but with an increasing number of cases found in small rodents and other small wild animals, it is definitely an important disease to vaccinate against. Rabies is deadly in horses and easily preventable with a yearly vaccine given by a licensed veterinarian. It is important to note that at this time, there is no vaccine that is approved for a 3 year vaccination protocol in horses as there is for cats and dogs.

There are other vaccines that are recommended based on lifestyle and environmental/management factors. These include Influenza, Rhinopneumonitis (or Equine Herpes virus), Strangles, Potomac Horse Fever and Botulism.

Influenza, Herpes virus and Strangles are important for horses that will be coming into contact with a large number of strange horses. This most commonly applies to race/show horses or horses that live at barns with a lot of new horses coming and going. Young and old horses that may have slightly less well developed immune systems are also more susceptible to these respiratory diseases.

Potomac Horse Fever is caused by a bacteria carried by water insects such as mayflies and dragonflies and is passed on to horses when they accidentally ingest infected insects. Vaccinated horses can still become infected with the bacteria, but tend to be spared the worst clinical signs (including death). Treatment is also very effective in cases discovered early in the disease process.

Botulism is a bacteria that horses are extremely sensitive to that causes weakness and eventual paralysis. It occurs in decaying plant material and is therefore a concern for people who feed haylage to their horses.

No one vaccination protocol suits all horses and owners; if you have any questions about determining the best vaccination program for your horse, do not hesitate to call the clinic and discuss it with any of the veterinarians!