



**LIPHOOK**  
EQUINE HOSPITAL

# Tetanus

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All horses and donkeys should be vaccinated against tetanus. Tetanus is frequently a fatal condition in the horse. Tetanus is caused by production of toxins by the bacteria, *Clostridium tetani*. The spores of this bacteria are commonly found in the soil and may be present in horses' faeces and may enter the tissues via wounds. Deep puncture wounds are particularly dangerous as they provide an ideal site for infection as the bacteria thrive in anaerobic (low oxygen) environments. Many tetanus cases have no known history of a wound however.

Effective immunity against tetanus requires a primary course of two vaccinations given 4-6 weeks apart, followed by a booster 12 months later. Thereafter subsequent vaccinations can be given at 2 yearly intervals. Foals will receive antibodies from their mother's colostrum and milk that will protect them for the first few weeks of life. Many foals are given tetanus anti-toxin shortly after birth as extra protection.

Primary vaccinations are usually started in a horse over the age of 5 months but tetanus vaccination may be recommended in younger animals if the dam is unvaccinated. Tetanus vaccination is often given as a combination vaccine with equine flu.

If your horse has not been vaccinated or vaccination programme has lapsed and it sustains a wound it is essential that a tetanus anti-toxin injection is given as soon as possible to prevent tetanus infection. This is not the same as a vaccination but will protect your horse against tetanus for approximately 3 weeks.

It is a very dangerous policy to leave your horse unvaccinated as many tetanus cases occur without any known wound having occurred in the horse.



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