

FEI Rule change in FEI requirements for Equine Influenza vaccination

Introduction

Equine Influenza (EI) is a viral respiratory disease which is highly contagious to susceptible horses. Outbreaks of the disease are occurring with increased frequency worldwide despite the widespread use of vaccines. The highly contagious nature of equine influenza means that it has the potential to seriously compromise international movement of horses. For a number of years the FEI rules have required an annual booster vaccination, but recent research indicates that, for many vaccines, protection declines after a few months. This means that towards the end of the vaccination year horses may become increasingly susceptible to infection again, but may not show clinical signs of disease. These cases are particularly dangerous as they can spread virus and could initiate outbreaks of disease.

The requirements for EI vaccination will be reviewed annually by the FEI Veterinary Committee and can be altered if the vaccination or disease situation changes.

Rule

From 1 January 2005 onwards, influenza vaccination for all horses competing in FEI competitions requires a vaccination within six months + 21 days of the competition. Horses competing regularly consequently require twice yearly boosters. The specific details to accomplish this are provided below:

1. All horses that intend to compete in FEI competition must have received at least an initial primary course of two vaccinations, the second dose of which must have been given between 21 and 92 days after the date of administration of the first dose. Thereafter, a third dose (referred to as the first booster) must be given within 6 months +21 days after the date of administration of the second primary dose, with at least annual boosters given subsequently (i.e. within 365 days of the last dose).
2. If the horse is scheduled to take part in an FEI competition, the last booster must have been given within 6 calendar months + 21 days of the day of competition or of entry to the FEI stables, whichever is the sooner. (The 21-day window has been provided to enable vaccination requirements to fit in with the competition schedule). Horses competing regularly consequently require twice yearly boosters.
3. It is also important that no vaccination should have been given within 7 days of the day of competition or of entry to the FEI stables, whichever is the sooner.
4. All horses that were certified as correctly vaccinated under the previous FEI equine influenza vaccination rule prior to 1st January 2005, should not need to start a primary course again provided that they have complied with the previous rule of primary course and annual re-vaccinations and the new rule of a booster vaccination within 6 calendar months + 21 days of the day of competition or entry to the FEI stables, whichever is the sooner.

Vaccines, Administration and Certification

- All proprietary equine influenza vaccines are acceptable to the FEI irrespective of the route of administration.
- All vaccines must be administered by a Veterinarian.
- The vaccination should be administered according to the manufacturer's instructions (i.e. intramuscular injection or intranasal). The FEI will accept intranasal vaccines for both primary and booster doses. However, it is not possible to change the route of administration between the first and second vaccination of the primary course.
- The details of the vaccine, serial/batch number, the date and route of administration must be recorded in the FEI passport.
- Where vaccination details are to be entered into new FEI passports/recognition cards or duplicates, if the vaccination history of the horse is very long, the Veterinarian who completes the descriptive page of the passport/recognition card may use a specific statement to certify that the vaccinations have been administered in accordance with FEI regulations (for the extract of the wording see Veterinary Regulations, Annex XIV.I.11).

Sanctions

As from 1 January 2006 a system of fines is being imposed by the Appeal Committee/Ground Jury for failure to comply with 6-month booster vaccinations.

- Less than one week after the 3-week vaccination window:
CHF 200
- Less than two weeks after the 3-week vaccination window:
CHF 300
- Less than four weeks after the 3-week vaccination window:
CHF 400
- More than four weeks after the 3-week vaccination window:
CHF 500, and cancellation of the horse's participation in the event.

Fines for other infringements relating to influenza vaccination will be as follows:

a) if no evidence of any current vaccination in passport: a maximum penalty of CHF 500. The horse should not be allowed to compete, it must be put in isolation and sent away from the event as soon as possible.

b) any infringements of vaccination dates should be noted in the passport so that it is not reported again at a future event. Please write in CAPITAL letters; remember that others will be dependent on the information that you have written in the passport.

c) no information available on the primary vaccination course need not lead to a penalty, and a repeat primary course is not required, provided the current passport contains a statement that the vaccination history of the horse has been checked and found to be correct (for exact wording see VR, Annex XIV.I.11).