



10261 County Road P38A ~ OMAHA, NE 68142

PHONE: 402-533-1151 ~ FAX: 402-533-1159

Email: office@nebraskaequine.com

**Michael J. Black D.V.M.**

**Michael P. Thomassen D.V.M.**

**Kimberly N. Conover D.V.M.**

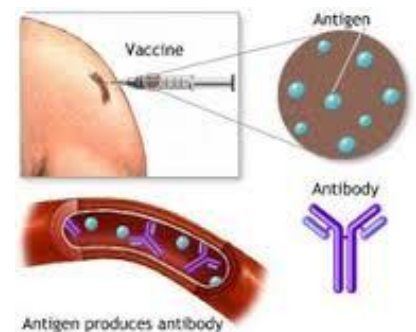
**Amy A. Cook D.V.M.**

## Why vaccinate your horse?

This is a very logical question to ask. Most horse owners equate spring with spring vaccinations for their horse. But why is this important? To answer this question effectively we must first understand what a vaccination is and secondly how does this apply to horses.

First, what is a vaccine? Listed below are two dictionary definitions:

1. *A preparation of killed microorganisms, living attenuated organisms, or living fully virulent organisms that is administered to produce or artificially increase immunity to a particular disease.*
2. *A Preparation containing either killed or weakened live microorganisms or their toxins, introduced by mouth, by injection, or by nasal spray to stimulate production of antibodies against an infectious agent. This confers immunity to that agent, since the B lymphocytes remain sensitized to it and respond to later infection by producing more antibodies.*



In summary what these definitions are saying; we are administering a product (vaccine) specific to a disease in which horses are susceptible to. This product stimulates the horse's own immune system to help the horse protect itself from becoming sick when exposed to this particular disease.

With this understanding of how the vaccine works we move onto the second aspect, how does this apply to horses? In general horses are exposed to many different diseases both through commingling with other horses such as pasture/stall mates, equine events (trail riding, shows, and clinics). All this exposure to other horses is a potential for your horse to pick up a new virus or bacteria and become sick. There are also many diseases that are spread between horses via insects, such as Encephalomyelitis (sleeping sickness) and West Nile Virus. In addition to these threats, there are also environmental threats such as Tetanus Toxoid which is introduced to horses via a cut or puncture wound and the threat of wild animal bites which may spread the Rabies Virus.



With all these daily threats, your horse's body is continually fighting off potential diseases. Vaccinating will greatly help facilitate this process. All quality vaccines have been studied and we know the duration of time in which they provide adequate immunity. For your "core vaccines" this is typically 12 months or yearly. Therefore, it makes sense to booster this immunity each year with the annual spring vaccinations. Outside of the "core vaccines" the time period may vary depending on type of vaccine,

what agent we are vaccinating against and the risk factors associated with the individual horse. Thus, there are varying vaccination interval recommendations and different vaccine types to use. An equine veterinarian would be best able to advise you on what your horse's risk factors are and make recommendations for your horse to provide the best protection.