

Equine Cough and Cold Season

As fall is arriving and our children are headed back to school, many mothers are anxiously waiting for their beloved child to come home with a runny nose and a cough. Well, your children are not the only members of your household that are at risk for a cough or a cold this season. This is the time of year when your horses are at their highest risk for developing a respiratory disease.

“Flu” (equine influenza) and “rhino” (equine rhinopneumonitis) are the two most common respiratory pathogens seen in the horses in the Texas panhandle. Both of these viruses are spread via close/direct contact with infected animals and can pave the way for bacterial pneumonia or other serious problems.

Many times these diseases are spread at horse shows, rodeos, playdays, **and boarding facilities**. All of the “stressors” associated with these events such as hauling, changes in weather and change in routine leave your horse’s immune system depleted and less effective. Combine this with the introduction of diseased animals under close quarters and you have a prime opportunity to leave with a sick horse.

There are several things that can be done to minimize your horse’s chances of contracting one of these diseases. General sanitation practices for your water/feed buckets, halters, brushes and tack can help keep transmission to a minimum. A diluted bleach solution can safely be used to clean the items you take to a horse show.

Boosting their Flu/Rhino vaccine should also be a part of everyone’s protocol if you are hauling your horse this fall. This is especially important if you own a young horse with a naïve immune system. These horses are at a greater risk of not only contracting an illness, but also developing serious complications.

For additional protection, immunostimulants such as Equistim and Zylexis, are available from your veterinarian to help bolster your horse’s natural defenses. These products are safe, efficacious, and offer an added level of security for performance horse owners/trainers who know the costs of lost training time and poor performance due to an illness.

As you haul to your equine events throughout the fall, be conscious of the problems that can arise. A small amount of prevention can keep you enjoying your horse and not spending your time nursing one back to health.