EQUINE ASTHMA



A HORSE OWNERS GUIDE

Shaping the future of animal health

Virbac

DOES YOUR HORSE COUGH?

Horses susceptible to Equine Asthma may experience symptoms such as:

- Coughing
- Exercise intolerance
- Increased breathing rate
- Nasal discharge
- Flared nostrils
- Laboured breathing
- In severe cases loud wheezing



WHAT IS EQUINE ASTHMA?

Equine asthma is an inflammatory disease of the smaller airways in the lungs and can be brought on by irritation of the airways and can also be related to allergies. The reaction in the airways causes increased production of fluid/mucous as well as the walls of the lungs thickening and becoming less flexible. The airways can also become narrowed due to spasm of the muscle lining. This causes obstruction in the airways that increases the respiratory rate, makes it harder for the horse to breathe and the horse will cough to try and clear the mucous.

Like humans, the disease can be more severe in some horses than others, any symptoms should be investigated.

MANAGEMENT OF THE DISEASE IS KEY

WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN TO MY HORSE?

During Winter when there are increased periods of stabling and eating dry forage, there is more opportunity for a horse to inhale dust particles, pollen and spores. Equine asthma is mainly seen in stabled horses, however due to the nature of the disease, may be present in horses living out in the Summer.

HOW DO I KNOW THAT MY HORSE HAS EQUINE ASTHMA?

The clinical symptoms, the horse's environment and response to treatments will help your vet to diagnose equine asthma. However being able to see the airways using endoscopy and taking samples from the lungs to look for inflammatory cells and bacteria provides your vet with valuable information to assess the severity of the disease and see whether there is an infection. This assessment will determine how your horse is treated.

HOW DO YOU TREAT EQUINE ASTHMA?

As discussed above, equine asthma is a disease that has many causes, with differing severity and different for every horse. Therefore there are a range of treatments that your vet may advise for your horse based upon their tests and assessment of their surroundings.

Most importantly, management of the disease is key. In mild cases, equine asthma can be controlled by making changes to the horse's environment or diet; whereas more severe cases may require short or long term medication.

HOW DO I MAKE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES?

Try to minimise your horses' exposure to dust and spores. Dust free bedding such as wood shavings or cardboard should be used and forage of good quality that is dust and mould free. Haylage is more appropriate for these horses or hay can be soaked or steamed. Providing well-ventilated stabling is also important as is hygiene. The more time horses can stay out of stables the better. Horses with pollen allergies can be more difficult. Turnout in different fields with a lower pollen count may help or moving yards may be a necessary option.

WHAT IF MY HORSE HAS MORE SEVERE EQUINE ASTHMA?

Medical management for more severe cases is necessary. Should your horse have a severe 'attack' it will be necessary for your vet to administer medicines that dilate their airways and reduce inflammation quickly. This may be followed by oral medication to manage their symptoms.

Depending upon the results of tests, some horses may require longer term management of their symptoms. Your vet can suggest medical management through equine inhalers or oral tablets.

It is essential that long term medical management goes hand in hand with effective environmental management as equine asthma is a life-long condition that requires commitment to controlling both the symptoms and its causes to keep your horse healthy.

This information is brought to you by Virbac the manufacturers of **Equipred**™

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