

Dear Dr. Wise,

Question: What vaccines does my horse need?

Answer: There are a ton of different vaccines that your horse could receive, but your vet will narrow it down based on what they know about your horse and what you do with it. Some things your vet will consider when developing your vaccine protocol include; your horse's age, where you live, how much your horse travels, whether your horse is healthy, as well as how much money you're willing to spend on vaccines.

Some vaccines, like Influenza or Strangles, are only recommended for horses at risk; such as those with weakened immune systems or those that travel and are exposed to a lot of other horses. There is no harm in giving these vaccines, but if you're on a budget these may be vaccines that you may opt not to give. Other vaccines may be required if you want to take your horse to certain horse shows or events, and your veterinarian will be able advise you of these. There are also specific vaccine protocols that are highly recommended for pregnant mares. These protocols ensure that the mare does not contract diseases that could compromise her pregnancy, and that she can provide her foal with immunity to certain diseases when it drinks her milk after it's born.

There are some vaccines that are recommended for all horses (of the appropriate age) because if the disease is contracted, it's often fatal. Others may be recommended because they can be transmitted to humans as well. This category is often called "core vaccines" and includes vaccines for diseases such as Eastern/Western Equine Encephalitis, Tetanus, West Nile, and Rabies. Other vaccines may be highly recommended based on whether a disease is prevalent in the region that you live. To find a plan that is right for you and your horse, contact your local veterinarian and ask to talk about your vaccination options.