



Media release

29 May 2019

EQUINE INFLUENZA REMAINS A SIGNIFICANT THREAT TO THE WELFARE OF THE UK HORSE POPULATION

The Animal Health Trust (AHT) is advising horse owners to remain vigilant and take all necessary precautions to minimise the threat of equine influenza (EI); as outbreaks of the disease continue to occur nationwide.

The AHT is continuing to confirm outbreaks of the disease, with last week seeing the second highest number of confirmed outbreaks in one week since the start of 2019.

Dr Richard Newton, Director of Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance, at the Animal Health Trust, said "As the competition season is getting into its busiest period the number of outbreaks is likely to continue to rise with the movement of horses across the country. Flu is still as much of a threat as it was earlier this year. Our advice to horse owners remains the same; be aware of the clinical signs of equine influenza and boost your horse's vaccination if it was given more than six months ago. Importantly isolate new arrivals on your yard and continue to practice good biosecurity at competitions and at home".

Equine flu is a highly contagious respiratory disease caused by the equine influenza virus. The virus is spread from horse to horse via respiratory droplets by direct contact as well as coughing and via indirect contact where appropriate biosecurity is not being followed. The virus relies on this transmission to new horses to survive and one of the most notable features of flu is the very quick spread of clinical signs in groups of horses and its ability to spread large distances in the air.

Dr Newton added, "We are still urging all competition and event organisers to support vaccination within 6 months in order to maximise the chance of horses having protective immunity. If all parts of the equestrian community pull together we stand a much better chance of containing these outbreaks which show no sign of abating."

Advice on equine flu, including information on precautions horse owners can take can be found at www.equiflunet.org.uk

Ends.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

AHT press office: David Bartholomew – email david.bartholomew@aht.org.uk

Additional notes:

- The **Animal Health Trust** is an independent charity, employing over 250 scientists, vets and support workers. It aims to improve the health and welfare of horses, dogs and cats through research. It also provides specialist referral services and continuous education to vets. Visit our website at www.aht.org.uk
- Registered Charity No. 209642

AHT
Animal Health Trust

EQUINE INFLUENZA

The Animal Health Trust recommends five basic protocols:

VACCINATE

BOOST YOUR HORSE'S VACCINATION IF IT WAS GIVEN MORE THAN **6** MONTHS AGO AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO DO THE SAME

If your horse is not vaccinated, it will need to start a course of vaccinations and will not have protection until two weeks after the second vaccine in the course is given.

ISOLATE

WHAT BIOSECURITY MEASURES ARE IN PLACE AT YOUR OWN YARD?

Immediately isolate new or unwell horses away from the main yard. Flu is easily spread amongst a group of horses.

INVESTIGATE

#1 IF YOU SUSPECT EQUINE FLU

CALL YOUR VET IMMEDIATELY TO INVESTIGATE

#2 IF YOU'RE PLANNING TO ATTEND AN EVENT OR EQUINE GATHERING,

CONTACT THE ORGANISERS & ASK ABOUT THEIR BIOSECURITY POLICIES

If you are not comfortable with what is in place, don't attend!

COMMUNICATE

BE OPEN

If you have a suspected or confirmed outbreak, tell others and help minimise the spread of flu.

MITIGATE

DO ALL YOU CAN TO KNOW THE RISK OF MOVING YOUR HORSE OR ATTENDING AN EVENT.

Mitigate against the risk and make your own sensible decision based on this.

The latest information from the Animal Health Trust on equine flu outbreaks is available from www.equiflunet.org.uk or by following @equiflunet on Twitter.

CH/EP/16/2019/02