

# Equine Influenza

**Equine influenza is a highly contagious viral respiratory disease which is spread via saliva and respiratory secretions from infected horses. In addition, a horse's cough can spread the influenza virus more than 40 feet and it can be carried on equipment and people's hands and clothes.**

## Clinical signs

- Fever (high temperature ranging from 39.5°C to 40.5°C)
- Nasal discharge
- A nasty cough
- Lethargy
- Inappetence
- Muscle soreness

## Diagnosis

Influenza infection may be suspected from clinical signs but confirmation requires either detection of the virus via a nasopharyngeal swab or detection of changes in antibody levels to the virus in the horses blood. To measure antibody levels two blood samples taken around two weeks apart and if results show that there has been an increase in the antibody levels in the blood it indicates an active infection.

## Treatment

- Affected horses need to be placed into quarantine and isolated from other horses as influenza is highly contagious.
- There are no anti-viral drugs that treat influenza so treatment mainly involves lots of supportive care and anti-inflammatory drugs prescribed by your vet to help reduce fever and muscle soreness and they can help improve the horses demeanour and encourage feeding.
- Some infections can be particularly nasty and because the virus attacks the lining of the upper airways and prevents the normal drainage of secretions from the lungs, fluid can collect in the lower airways and become infected by bacteria causing pneumonia which requires intensive care treatment and antibiotics.
- If you do suspect flu, please consult with your vet for help.

## Prevention

- Vaccination is an important and inexpensive way to protect your horse from influenza.
- Quarantine new horses coming onto yards for at least 7 days, following infection the incubation period (the time taken for clinical signs to develop) is between 3-5 days. Disinfect buckets and equipment and prevent nose-to-nose contact between horses.