

There are good reasons why you should be concerned with maintaining the proper health of your horses or ponies.

First, you have a responsibility to all animals entrusted to your care to protect them from injury, sickness and pain.

Secondly, any time your horse is ill it will prevent you from using him.

Thirdly, if your horse needs treatment, it will usually cost you time and money.

If we take the horse industry as a whole, we find that thousands of dollars are lost each year because horse owners did not follow the prescribed practices of good breeding, feeding, management, and disease prevention. This is sad, indeed, since the knowledge and materials necessary to prevent most of these losses are readily available.

Animal scientists have discovered many practices which horse owners find beneficial in the maintenance of healthy horses. There are many fine drugs, vaccines, disinfectants and other products manufactured today that can be used successfully to help keep horses healthy. Fortunately the people in veterinary medicine are ready and willing to help in the wise use of these materials and in helping you to set up a sound health program for your horses.

There are many preventive measures which are good common sense ideas with scientific principles behind them. Some of the more important ones are listed below.

1) Feed your horses a nutritionally balanced ration, in sufficient quantities in the correct manner.

The scientific basis for this recommendation is:

A horse's well-being depends largely on its nutrition. If the level of nutrition is high, the body defenses against diseases will be stronger. This also applies to the problems of internal parasites. Unsoundnesses of the feet and legs are sometimes traced to deficient rations. The same is true of other abnormalities such as infertility and abortion. It is possible to overfeed horses and by so doing create serious problems. A horse may founder, become temporarily infertile or aggravate respiratory problems from being overfed. Some of these troubles are caused from feeding moldy or dusty feed or from feeding or allowing access to cold water too soon after heavy work.

2) Provide clean, healthful quarters for your horses.

The scientific basis for this recommendation is:

Disease organisms often grow and thrive in organic waste. Flies and insects as well as vermin, which also harbor disease, thrive under filthy conditions. Removing the source (reservoir) of the disease organism lessens the chances of disease.

If your horse is kept in a clean environment, his body will not be constantly fighting to ward off disease. Therefore, he will make better use of his feed, will feel better and perform better because of less stress from disease.

Horses do best when allowed plenty of freedom to exercise and plenty of clear fresh air, provided there are no

drafts. Most respiratory troubles develop from keeping horses in tight barns which are too warm and humid.

3) Carry out a planned immunization and parasite control program.

The scientific basis for this recommendation is:

Contagious diseases are caused by microorganisms, mostly bacteria and viruses. However, your horses can develop defenses against many microorganisms. These defenses are the antibodies in the blood.

By vaccinating your horses against specific diseases they will build up their antibody defenses against possible invasion by microorganisms.

The secret of successful immunization is to have a methodical plan, developed in consultation with your veterinarian and then to carry it out before disease strikes. Vaccination after your horses have been exposed to disease will seldom give them enough time to build up their defenses to a large enough degree. You might sustain serious losses in such a case.

Horses are often inoculated against tetanus since this organism is usually present in horse stables.

Internal parasites can cause stunting, illness and even death if not controlled. They are particularly harmful to foals and colts up to two years of age. Periodic examination of fecal samples from your young horses by your veterinarian will give you information on the extent of the problem.

The most scientific way to prevent disease and parasitism in your horses is to plan a total immunization and parasite control program with your veterinarian. You must have your horses vaccinated at the right time, with the right vaccine and by the best method to be sure they will build up an immunity. You must also treat for parasites at the proper time and with the proper material in the prescribed way to successfully protect your horses.

4) Get an accurate diagnosis of the disease problem from a veterinarian.

The scientific basis for this recommendation is:

Correct diagnosis of illness or abnormal conditions in your horses is necessary before they can be treated intelligently. Improper treatment based merely on supposition can result in loss of time and money or even the animals involved.

A diagnosis requires much specialized knowledge and many procedures. Veterinarians have this knowledge and also the equipment necessary to make the study. If they lack in either facilities or knowledge in a special situation, they can call on the state diagnostic laboratories and scientists for assistance.

5) Keep your horses well exercised, groomed and feeling fit.

The scientific basis for this recommendation is:

If your horses are confined and cannot exercise by themselves they will lose muscle tone, they may become stiff

or lame and their digestive systems will not function as effectively. Horses in their natural state had the opportunity for unlimited exercise in a clean, outdoor environment. This enabled them to keep fit which meant they were better equipped to ward off disease and unsoundnesses.

6) Consult your veterinarian. Plan a disease prevention and parasite control program with him.

The scientific basis for this recommendation is:

Preventing disease is more effective than treating your horses after they become sick.

Your local veterinarian is best qualified to help outline a disease control program. He is trained in his field and he is acquainted with the major disease problems in your particular area.

By keeping in constant touch with your veterinarian he knows the history of your horse or horses and will be in a better position to make an accurate and rapid diagnosis.

Disease prevention will probably be most effective when you and your veterinarian work together in all phases of the disease prevention program.

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