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EQUINE

This fall we are launching a community initiative to get as many horses protected against major disease threats as possible. The Mennonite community has a unique and admirable reliance on their horses and each fall and winter we see too many cases of severe influenza and strangles (distemper).

New and very effective vaccines against these diseases have come to the market over the last few years and now have effective tools to prevent severe illness. Expect a phone call outlining our fall program. We hope the end result will be healthier horses, reduced disease transmission and focus on long term preventative medicine.

The Value of Preventative Medicine

I can't believe it's this time of year already, the leaves will begin changing colors soon and then winter will be upon us. With the start of fall, and winter fast approaching, it is important to consider that the horses under your care are properly vaccinated, especially against influenza, rhinopneumonitis and strangles. These diseases are increasingly seen in the winter months due to the horses being kept indoors and that they are transmitted from close and direct nose to nose contact. As is often the case in veterinary medicine, prevention is the key. The initial cost of vaccination plus the required boosters always seem to be expensive, but it is important to compare that the actual cost of treatment for these diseases is significantly worse. The potential outcomes and potential re-infection of the animal or the infection of the remainder of the animals are enormous.

To illustrate the benefit of preventative medicine, I'll perform a cost analysis comparing vaccination to potential treatment costs for influenza and strangles/distemper.

INFLUENZA	TREATMENT	VACCINATION
CALL FEE	EMERGENCY \$60-80	ROUTINE \$45
VACCINATION	\$0	\$29
INITIAL TREATMENT	\$60	\$0
MEDICATION	\$120	\$0
COMPLICATIONS	\$150	\$0
INFECTION OF OTHERS	\$200 PER HORSE	\$0
VACCINATION BOOSTER	\$0	\$29
TOTAL	\$590 - \$610	\$103

STRANGLES/DISTEMPER	TREATMENT	VACCINATION
CALL FEE	EMERGENCY \$60-80	ROUTINE \$45
VACCINATION	\$0	\$23
INITIAL TREATMENT	\$60	\$0
MEDICATION	\$120	\$0
COMPLICATIONS	\$150-500 - POSSIBLE DEATH	\$0
INFECTION OF OTHERS	\$250 - 500 POSSIBLE DEATH	\$0
VACCINATION BOOSTER	\$0	\$23
TOTAL	\$640 - 1260	\$91

As you can see the cost of performing preventative medicine is significantly less than treating once the animal becomes ill. The treatment costs can vary depending on the severity of the illness. With strangles/distemper, the complications are very serious and can be deadly. You must also remember that there is a quarantine time where the horses should not come into contact with others. Humans can very easily transmit this disease to other horses.

Vaccination is not a guarantee that the horse won't become ill, but if the horse does contract the disease they will not be as ill as their non-vaccinated counter-part. Their disease will be less severe and usually significantly shorter in duration. Also with the strangles/distemper vaccination, the horses will often maintain a high level of protection and then a blood sample to detect their protection is advised with the potential of not requiring a vaccination.

DAIRY

Autumn is often a time that many farmers think about vaccination of the dairy herd. Many farmers have already made the switch to modified live vaccine and have seen favourable results. For those farmers who are not using MLV there is some new technology available to help guard your herd. CattleMaster Gold vaccine from Pfizer has added a fetal protection claim to their label. CattleMaster GOLD FP 5 contains IBR and PI₃ viruses and modified-live BRSV plus a liquid, adjuvanted preparation of inactivated BVD virus strains (Types 1 and 2). CattleMaster is for vaccination of healthy cattle, including pregnant cows, as an aid in preventing abortion caused by infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR, bovine herpesvirus Type 1), persistently infected calves caused by bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD) virus Types 1 and 2, and respiratory disease caused by IBR, BVD (Types 1 and 2), parainfluenza₃ (PI₃) and bovine respiratory syncytial virus (BRSV). The most severe BVD problems occur when pregnant cows and heifers are infected. The virus can cross the placenta, infect the fetus and result in the birth of a calf that is a carrier of the BVD virus for life (persistent infection). While no vaccine can guarantee 100% efficacy, studies showed 100% protection from BVD Type 1 and Type 2 persistent infection in the CattleMaster vaccinates while, 88% of non-vaccinates were persistently infected.

While the killed vaccines perform very well the preferred route continues to be modified live vaccination. MLV provides gold standard protection against BVD (Type 1 and 2, IBR, PI₃, and BRSV). This affords the best protection against viruses which can cause respiratory and reproductive disease in your herd.

Vaccination is a critical component of the overall health and performance of your herd. Consider the choices carefully and discuss with your veterinarian. Be sure your herd is protected.