

For Your Information

Courtesy Of:

Cotati Large Animal Hospital

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Equine Injections

The administration of an injection to a horse is a mechanical skill that can easily be learned. It must be understood, however, that the most critical elements of the procedure are determining what vaccine or medication is to be administered and by what route. These criteria should be arrived at after consultation with your veterinarian.

It is important for the non-veterinarian to understand that infections and reactions can occur as a result of any injection, and that a non-veterinarian may be legally liable for the damages incurred. Therefore, there are some rules to observe when giving injections to horses:

1. Do not give any injection to a horse you do not know, unless directed to do so by the owner's veterinarian, and with the owner's consent and knowledge.
2. Have your veterinarian instruct you as to how an injection should be given.
3. Only use sterile equipment. **Never use a needle more than once.**

The type of injection most frequently used by today's horseman is the intramuscular (IM) injection. The majority of, if not all, routine injections used in horse health programs today are IM injections. The medication or vaccine is injected deep into a large muscle mass where the drug is gradually absorbed into the horse's system.

The size of the needle used depends upon the medication injected. A heavy solution such as penicillin will require a larger bore (18 gauge) needle, while a thin, watery solution is best given with a smaller diameter (20-22 gauge) needle.

Commonly used sites include the neck, the gluteus and the semitendinosus muscles. The neck is preferred by some because of ease and safety. It is important to stay within the triangular-shaped area of the neck to avoid hitting the scapula, cervical vertebrae, jugular vein or carotid artery. Only small non-reactive volumes should be given in this location. Reactions may make the horse so sore that he will not bend his neck to eat. The gluteus is preferred by many because of its large muscle mass. However, one must be very cautious because this area drains very poorly in the cases of abscesses. Advantages of the semitendinosus include its large mass and the horse's frequent usage of this muscle which speeds up absorbency of the drug. Abscesses in this area tend to drain well.

Most veterinarians and horsemen simply clean the area of any noticeable dirt and give the injection "dry" and with no other preparations. This procedure appears to be satisfactory with no noticeable increase in occurrences of infections or abscesses. The most important single thing to do to prevent infections is to **always use a new, sterile needle and a clean syringe.**

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INJECTION SITES

