

UPDATE: Equine Influenza Vaccine Shortage

Further to the [update](#) issued jointly with the British Equestrian Veterinary Association (BEVA) and the British Horseracing Authority (BHA) on 17 August, it has been confirmed there are distribution problems with equine influenza doses of Boehringer Ingelheim's Proteq product. This is a Europe-wide issue, but the impact of a shortage of doses has hit the UK first, with a number of veterinary practices already out of stock. Early indications from the company are that the issues will continue until the end of October at the very earliest.

Working closely with BEVA, British Equestrian's Emergency Response Group (BEF ERG) can offer temporary guidelines to help minimise the impact of the shortage of vaccine stocks for a limited period whilst preserving the health of our national equine herd. The BEF ERG will continue to meet regularly to monitor the situation and work on a strategy to manage vaccine stocks through the shortage and as supplies return to normal.

BEVA have modelled advice based on [risk groups](#) within the equine population, based on their vaccination history and frequency of mixing/competing:

Lowest	Adult horses Fully vaccinated and mixing rarely Other horses on the yard occasionally mixing
Low	Adult horses Incomplete vaccination history and mixing occasionally Other horses on the yard occasionally mixing
Medium	Adult horses Fully vaccinated and mixing frequently
High	Young horses aged four or under Incomplete vaccination history and mixing rarely Other horses on the yard rarely mixing
Highest	Young horse aged four or under and mixing frequently

Leisure horses

We recommend general leisure horse owners in the low or lowest category whose horse's 12-monthly booster is due anytime while the shortage is in place **should defer their vaccination by up to three months**, giving a **maximum of 15 months** since the previous booster. Any decision to defer the 12-month booster should be done against local risk assessment and in consultation with the owner's vet.

BEVA has established that there is evidence that horses are still protected at 15 months, even if this situation is far from ideal and the protection isn't as great as it was at 12 months. Having had a good history of vaccination in the past is likely to help.

Those who defer their vaccination should then **follow with a booster within nine months** to ensure the protocol of horses having **two boosters within a two-year period is maintained**. Horses due from late August until the situation is resolved would move to an annual vaccination programme which would look like: 2021 – 12-month interval, then 2022 – up to 15-month interval and in 2023 – up to nine-month interval.

Example horse:

- 15 September 2021 – annual EI booster administered
- 2022 booster deferred to a maximum of 15 December 2022
- Booster administered 10 December 2022

- 2023 booster due by two years from the 2021 date.

Horse owners who defer their vaccination should get the affected **horse's passport signed and dated by their vet to document the delay** with the statement '12-month booster delayed to due to vaccine shortage – due before > vet to insert date (within three months of due date) <'. This passport entry can be made anytime from one month prior to the original vaccine due date until the date on which the 15-month extension has elapsed, provided that it has been signed before the horse attends a gathering.

It's important to note that owners of horses who would fall into the criteria below are **strongly advised to stay within the 12-month vaccination requirement** to meet requirements or be at risk of having to restart the vaccination course or be refused entry:

- **planning to affiliate** with any member body with a current 12-month vaccination requirement in their rules
- are destined to race under **BHA rules**
- have international aspirations to compete under **FEI rules**
- currently or in the future planning to take part in activities which **require competition and/or stabling at a racecourse, agricultural/equestrian college or equestrian venue** which operates a six and/or 12-monthly vaccination requirement. BEF is liaising closely with these venues and will provide specific information should any decide to allow horses vaccinated between 12 and 15 months during the vaccine shortage to use their facilities at present and in the future.

Competition horses

For horses registered to member bodies who regulate affiliated competitions, a different approach has been agreed with the Olympic disciplines. Due to the vaccination requirements currently in place there is a higher level of immunity among those horses competing, providing a strong foundation and reducing the risk level. However, competition horses also mix more frequently with others and there is a need for close regulatory alignment with other governing bodies, including the FEI and BHA.

Having reviewed the advice and recommendations from BEVA, we are awaiting further guidance from the FEI for international competition, which is anticipated later this week, on Thursday 8 September. In the meantime, owners with horses who compete under the auspices of one of our member bodies, or plan to do so in future, should note the following measures:

<p>British Horse Society (including British Riding Clubs), Pony Club, Riding for the Disabled Association, Association of British Riding Schools and The Showing Council</p>	<p>Horses competing under their rules will be permitted to defer to a 15-month booster followed by a nine-month booster until further notice to preserve two boosters in two years. These horses should have their passports marked and signed by their vet to document the delay and identify the new booster due date (within 15 months).</p> <p>Owners of horses who are considering registering with a member body retaining the 12-month requirement, have an aspiration to compete internationally or take part in activities which use racecourses and/or agricultural or equine colleges, should stay within the 12-month booster requirement.</p>
<p>British Dressage, British Eventing, British Horseball Association and British Carriagedriving</p>	<p>These disciplines currently state that the most recent booster injection must have been given within six calendar months (+21 days) prior to the horse competing. There will be a temporary national derogation of this rule with immediate effect, until further notice. The requirement of a 12-month vaccination booster will continue to remain in place.</p>
<p>British Showjumping</p>	<p>The strong recommendation to have a vaccination booster within six months of a competition has been removed with immediate effect. The requirement of a 12-month vaccination booster will remain in place until further notice.</p>

British Equestrian Vaulting	Will retain their 12-month booster rule for the foreseeable future while monitoring the situation.
Endurance GB	<p>The 12-month booster requirement will be retained. However, in exceptional circumstances where the shortage prevents a booster being administered, the horse may extend to 15 months with prior approval by the EGB Welfare Director. These horses must have their passports marked and signed by their vet to document the delay and identify the new booster due date (within 15 months).</p> <p>Competitors/supporters who go over their 12-month booster will need to restart their vaccination programme if they wish to enter an FEI ride, an Endurance GB ride where FEI sections are taking place or a ride where BHA vaccination rules apply.</p>
British Reining, Mounted Games Association of Great Britain and UK Polocrosse Association	Decision on retaining a 12-month requirement or derogation to 15 months is pending.
Horse owners are reminded that many member body rules require horses to have clear six- or seven-day period from a booster being administered to competing. Please consult your discipline rule book.	

Further updates

We will share any updates from the FEI on their requirements following their Board meeting taking place on Thursday 8 September. Owners of horses who compete internationally under FEI registration should endeavour to follow their current requirements until told otherwise. The BHA [issued an update](#) on their current position on 27 August and will continue to monitor the situation with the BEF and BEVA.

Those who are not affiliated with a member body but compete or regularly mix with other horses should consult with their vet against BEVA's risk groups when making a decision on deferring vaccination boosters.

Celia Marr, Chair of British Equestrian's Equine Infectious Diseases Advisory Group, commented, "We find ourselves in a very difficult situation on how best to mitigate the risks posed by this vaccine shortage. However, the ERG is working collaboratively within BEF's member bodies and with BEVA and BHA, and we hope that we have established guidelines which allow vets to effectively manage supplies within their practices while preserving the established herd immunity amongst our vaccinated population.

"We know the devastating impact an equine flu epidemic can have and must continue to work together to prevent that. Moving the low and lowest risk and some medium-risk horses to a 15- and nine-month programme, while not perfect, is a good solution to ensure we have enough vaccine in the country to protect our most vulnerable horses, manage the equine influenza risk and prevent as many horses as possible from having to restart their vaccination course. We're grateful to the member bodies for working with us to manage the situation."

Jim Eyre, BEF Chief Executive added, "The ERG, our member bodies, BEVA and BHA have acted decisively in what is an ever-changing situation, which we'll continue to monitor closely and manage. We want to reassure horse owners in the United Kingdom that deferring their booster for three months will give protection to healthy, adult horses with a good vaccination history and following with the next booster within nine months, so the horse effectively has 'two in two', is important. We're grateful for everyone's immediate support and actions in a bid to manage this crisis. The ERG will continue monitor the situation with member bodies and BEVA and, while the end of October has been indicated for supply issues to be resumed, we will make plans under the assumption that this could continue. We will continue to meet until normal vaccine supplies are resumed and six and/or 12-month boosters can be reinstated for all vaccinated horses."

The need for every owner to put in strong biosecurity and surveillance measures is always important but now more than ever. Horse owners should be alert to the [signs of illness in horses](#) and, if displayed, not travel or compete, but call the vet as soon as possible. Equally, when introducing new horses into your yard/herd, you should always operate a quarantine programme. It's advisable currently to adopt pre-movement PCR testing and a five-day PCR test five days after arrival for new equines if unvaccinated.

BEVA has [frequently asked questions](#) on their websites, which may help with any queries horse owners may have.

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