

Dear horse enthusiasts

Unfortunately we got the first report about a positive AHS horse – not yet confirmed.

Please phone Windhoek Veterinary Clinic (061 228405, 0811241668) if suspecting a AHS case, we need blood in EDTA (lavender tube) and PLAIN (red tube) for serology and virus isolation 2 tubes each to send one to Umberto and one to Equine research at OP. If a dead horse – phone us Umberto would like to take the samples personally and do the PM – if he cannot make it we need lung, spleen and heart on ice for viral isolation.

The work done so far: Can do antibody determination for all 9 strains in the horses to see which one is at risk.

Dr Daan Goosen developed the field vaccine and is working together with us here in Namibia. The work done on the field vaccine is very promising. Unfortunately we do not know exactly which strains are all in the vaccine but we included strain 8, 5 and 9 from last year's outbreak in the vaccine. The antibody reaction to the vaccine is better than to the live OP vaccine - on the few horses we did the work on (11 foals).

In my opinion and I want to stress this is only my personal opinion we should vaccinate all our horses in winter with the live OP vaccine and in summer with the dead field vaccine. The reason is with the live vaccine we get fever reactions and the horses develop a viraemia and if then bitten by the midget we perhaps get the cycle going and infect the midget and spread of disease. In winter the midget load is low and spread not such a danger.

OP live vaccine: Vaccinate all horses older than 6 month once yearly. Vaccinate one and two in at least 3 week interval. Pregnant mares can abort? Horses must not be ridden hard for 3 weeks after each vaccination.

Field vaccine – first year vaccinate twice in 4 week interval and then once yearly. Can vaccinate foals with one month repeat at two month and 5 month. Do not vaccinate mares when breeding (one week before and one week after breeding). Pregnant mares can be vaccinated at any stage. Horses can stay in full training.

Our long term goal: To make a safe dead vaccine to have the horses fully protected. We want to make 9 single dead vaccines, one for each strain. This could mean that we have to vaccinate the young horses in the first year perhaps 9 – 18 times to get them protected. If there is an outbreak we can within 24 hours identify the strain and vaccinate all the horses with this specific strain for immediate protection.

We need all the strains to make this possible – therefore the appeal to get samples.

Thank you all for the cooperation till now.

Dr Wolfgang Späth