

# **African horse sickness control**

## **Vaccination permissions report**

### **2018/2019 Season**

## Introduction

Annual vaccination against African horse sickness (AHS) is compulsory in South Africa (Animal Diseases Act, 35 of 1984) except in the AHS free and surveillance zones in the AHS controlled area in the Western Cape Province. Vaccination against AHS in these zones can only be performed following written approval from the Veterinary Services of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture (WCDOA). Permission to vaccinate against AHS is only granted for vaccination to be performed between 1 June and 31<sup>st</sup> October each year. This vaccination period is based on the potential for vaccine virus reassortment/reversion to virulence and the risk of transmission during periods of increased vector activity<sup>1</sup>. The restricted vaccination period mitigates this risk.

The process for vaccination permissions is summarized and available online [here](#)<sup>2</sup>. This report briefly summarises the vaccination permission applications that were received and the descriptive statistics of those permissions that were issued. Permissions are given on an individual horse basis, with horses associated with specific holdings, and the information is analysed as such.

## Summary of permissions issued

The total permission applications received are shown in Table 1 with their comparisons to the 2018 and 2017 season. There are consistently approximately 1100 applications received each year totaling an associated 7300 horses, and permissions are given for approximately 96%. By far the majority (97.5% - n= 279) of declined applications in 2019 related to invalid or non-existent passports – this is similar to previous years. .

**Table 1: Number of applications received for vaccination permissions with associated horses. Granted applications are shown with a percentage of the total in brackets.**

Year	Applications received/Associated holdings	Total horses applied for	Total horses granted
2017	1078/647	7183	6893 (96%)
2018	1117/606	7277	7058 (97%)
2019	1108/610	7330	7044 (96%)

Forty veterinarians and veterinary practices were registered as the associated vet likely to perform the vaccination, with the top 5 practices responsible for vaccinating 73.5% of the permission granted horses, and the top 10 practices responsible for 88.5% of all permission granted horses.

Table 2 shows the reasons that were provided by applicants (granted horses only) when requesting permission to vaccinate. The majority (92.3%) were to enable horses to comply with AHS movement requirements.

<sup>1</sup> Weyer, C.T. et al., 2016. African horse sickness caused by genome reassortment and reversion to virulence of live, attenuated vaccine viruses, South Africa, 2004–2014. Emerging Infectious Diseases, 22(12).

<sup>2</sup> <http://jdata.co.za/myhorse/documents/infographics/Vaccination%20Schema/1.%20Vaccinating%20against%20AHS%20in%20the%20Free%20and%20Surveillance%20Zone.pdf>

Table 2: Reasons provided for the vaccination of horses.

Overarching reason	Count
Movement requirements – current and for future events	6503 (92.3%)
Individual protection (owner and yard)*	518 (7.5%)
Insurance	23 (3.2%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>7044</b>

\*Individual protection is cited when owners/yard managers believe that the risk to their horse (based on movement risk or prior involvement in outbreaks) justifies vaccination.

We now have three years of detailed, individual horse information for the vaccination permission process in the AHS controlled area. 4556 horses that were granted permission in 2019 had also been granted permission in 2018, making up 62.1% of the total for the year. 2987 horses were granted permission to be vaccinated in 2017, 2018 and 2019, accounting for 40.7% of permission granted horses in 2019. There are currently 14725 horses registered in the AHS surveillance and free zone.

The vaccination permission system does require intensive regulatory checking, and particularly since individual passports for applicants are thoroughly checked. In 2019 we did allow for early applications, although permissions only got sent from 1 June since vaccination was only permitted from then. Table 3 therefore includes applications that were received prior to June 2019 but the *Days processed to response* is not applicable for those months. The applications received prior to the actual season do impact the response time in processing applications to vaccinate – this is clear from the improving processing time from June through to October.

Table 3: Administrative time taken for 2019 vaccination permissions applications

Month (of 2019)	Total applications received		Median days – application to response
March	169	478 prior to season	Not applicable, however 50% of all applications received prior to 1 June were responded to by 7 June.
April	113		
May	196		
June	170	630 during season	39
July	188		24
August	146		13
September	95		11
October	31		2

## Conclusion

Vaccination coverage within the AHS controlled area, including the AHS surveillance and free zone continues to be fairly comprehensive with approximately 50% of the known population being vaccinated based on permissions requested. A high number of those horses though are associated with repeat requests from year to year, and also since vaccination is a prerequisite for movement into the controlled area, any new adult horses entering the controlled area will be vaccinated already.

## References and Acknowledgements

We are grateful to both horse owners and veterinarians for their patience during the vaccination permission season. We are grateful for the continued support of the Western Cape Veterinary Services who assist in this program and in particular Dr Gary Buhrmann from State Vet Boland who reviewed this report. We acknowledge team members from the SAEHP: Danielle Pienaar; Esthea Russouw; Gillese de Villiers; Marie van der Westhuizen; Johanne Jacobs and Lizel Germishuys who performed much of the data processing for the vaccination permission system.