



SA EQUINE
HEALTH & PROTOCOLS
EXPORTS SOUTH AFRICA

African horse sickness control

**Vaccination permissions
2021 season**

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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 31st October each year. This vaccination period is based on the potential for vaccine virus re-assortment/reversion to virulence and the risk of transmission during periods of increased vector activity¹. The restricted vaccination period mitigates this risk.

The process for vaccination permissions is summarized and available online [here](#)². 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 previous seasons. Historically there are approximately 1100 applications received each year totaling an associated 7300 horses. Since 2020 however these applications and associated horses have been fewer with less than 1000 applications totaling ~6700 individuals. In 2021 the majority (105 of 132 – 80%) of declined applications in 2021 related to invalid or non-existent passports, with a further 24 (18%) horses declined due to incomplete applications.

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%)
2020	976/567	6691	6476 (97%)
2021	920/568	6775	6643 (98%)

Thirty-seven veterinarians and veterinary practices were registered as the associated vet likely to perform the vaccination (compared to 39 the previous season), with the top 5 practices responsible for vaccinating 78.8% of the permission granted horses (n= 5326 of 6643), and the top 10 practices responsible for 89.7% of all permission granted horses.

¹ 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).

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

Table 2 shows the reasons that were provided by applicants (granted horses only) when requesting permission to vaccinate. The majority (89.4%) were to enable horses to comply with AHS movement requirements. This is also similar to previous years.

Table 2: Reasons provided for the vaccination of horses.

Overarching reason	Count
Movement requirements (current and for future events)	5924 (89.4%)
Individual protection (owner and yard) *	684 (10.3%)
Insurance	35 (0.01%)
Total	6643

*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 five years of detailed, individual horse information for the vaccination permission process in the AHS controlled area. 4195 (4457 in 2019-2020) horses that were granted permission in 2021 had also been granted permission in 2020, making up 63.14% (68.8% in 2019-2020) of the total for the year. 1736 horses were granted permission to be vaccinated in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021, accounting for 26.13% of permission granted horses in 2020. There are currently 16498 horses registered in the AHS surveillance and free zone.

Conclusion

Vaccination coverage within the AHS controlled area, including the AHS surveillance and free zone continues to be fairly comprehensive with approximately 40-50% of the known population being vaccinated based on permissions requested during any year. 14967 different horses have been vaccinated in the AHS surveillance and free zone in the last 5 years (i.e., since 2017). 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.

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