



SA EQUINE
HEALTH & PROTOCOLS
EXPORTS SOUTH AFRICA



African horse sickness control

Vaccination permissions

2023

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2023



**Western Cape
Government**
FOR YOU

2023

Applications

880 on
501
holdings for
6473 horses

Approved

6252 horses
(97% of
applicants)

Reason

Movement
92.4%

Vets

40 practices
with top 5
vaccinating
~80%

Repeats

65.8% from
prior year
1057 horses
every year
since 2017

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 the free and surveillance zones should be considered if required for movement purposes when moving to a zone that would require vaccination in order to return and can only be performed following written approval from the Veterinary Services of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture (WCDOA). Vaccination in these zones is otherwise not recommended. Vaccination against AHS in the AHS controlled area, including the protection zone, is only to be performed between 1 June and 31st October each year. Permission to vaccinate against AHS is therefore only granted during this period. 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 during 2023. 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. The number of unique applications and horses applied for have decreased over the years with 2023 now the lowest to date at 880 applications for 6473 horses. In 2023 the majority (205 of 221 – 92%) of declined applications related to invalid or non-existent passports, with only 6 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%)
2022	890/529	6530	6407 (98%)
2023 (this report)	880/501	6473	6252 (97%)

Forty veterinarians and/or veterinary practices were registered as the associated vet likely to perform the vaccination – this has remained stable with 29 in 2022 and 2020 and 37 in 2021. The top 5 practices were responsible for vaccinating 80.2% of the permission granted horses (n= 5018 of 6252), and the top 10 practices responsible for 90.1% 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 (92.4%, up from 91.1% in 2022 and 89.4% in 2021) were to enable horses to comply with AHS movement requirements.

Table 2: Reasons provided for the vaccination of horses.

Overarching reason	Count
Movement requirements (current and for future events)	5779 (92.4%)
Individual protection (owner and yard) *	432 (7%)
Insurance	41 (0.6%)
Total	6252

*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 seven years of detailed, individual horse information for the vaccination permission process in the AHS controlled area. 4116 horses that were granted permission in 2023 had also been granted permission in 2022 (compared to 4271 in 2021 – 2022, 4195 in 2020 - 2021 and 4457 in 2019 -2020), making up 65.8% (66.7% in 2021-2022, 63.14% in 2020-2021) of the total for the year. Across seven years: 1057 horses were granted permission to be vaccinated in 2017 through 2023, accounting for 17% of permission granted horses in 2023. There are currently 19093 horses registered in the AHS surveillance and free zone.

When vaccination permissions are requested, it is for prospective vaccination, and follow up verification of actual vaccination is not undertaken. Below we evaluate the horses that have been granted vaccination permission since 2017, and to query the movement database to establish what percentage of those granted permission would reasonably have required it. Since 2017: a total of 18 092 individual horses have been granted permission to be vaccinated. Of these, 68.7% have moved in a fashion that would have required AHS vaccination. Of the remaining 31.3%: the primary reason for permission requested was on the basis for movement or competition (83.4%) and individual horse/yard protection (15.6%).

Conclusion

Vaccination coverage within the AHS controlled area, including the AHS surveillance and free zone continues to be comprehensive with approximately 40-50% of the known population being vaccinated based on permissions requested during any year. 18 092 different horses have been vaccinated in the AHS surveillance and free zone in the last 7 years (i.e., since 2017). A high number of those horses 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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