



Horses can suffer from a number of viral disease, infection with Rotavirus is just one of many. If you are considering breeding your horse you should be aware of this disease and how it can affect breeding status as well as your potential foal's general health and well-being. Rotavirus is the most commonly diagnosed cause of viral enteritis in young foals.

What is Rotavirus?

Rotavirus is a common environmental pathogen and is the most common cause of viral enteritis in young foals. Foals under 3 months of age are the most severely infected, with high mortality rates if not treated aggressively.

What are the symptoms?

If a foal is infected with Rotavirus it will not suckle from its dam and will be depressed. The foal's temperature will often be normal, but it may suffer from profuse diarrhoea, which may persist for a few weeks.

Can it be treated?

Foals under 3 months of age are the most severely infected, with high mortality rates if not treated aggressively with fluids, electrolytes and nutritional support given intravenously or by nasogastric intubation.

Treatment can be lengthy and expensive.

How can I prevent my horse from contracting Rotavirus?

Prevention should include good hygiene, a reduction in the population density of foals and mares should be tested to ensure they have adequate antibody levels against Rotavirus - the foal will obtain these antibodies via the mare's colostrum.

Vaccination of pregnant mares is possible, this increases the Rotavirus antibody level in the mare's colostrum and should be administered in the 8th, 9th and 10th months of pregnancy. Vaccination provides passive transfer of antibodies to foals via the mare's colostrum and aids in protecting foals against this potentially fatal disease.

For advice on vaccination programmes, specific to breeding, contact your vet.

If you want any other information on health issues concerning your horse please contact Hampden Veterinary Hospital on 01296 423666 and we will be happy to advise you.