



Equine Asthma Factsheet

What is equine asthma?

Equine asthma, also known as recurrent airway obstruction (RAO) or heaves, is a chronic inflammatory disease of the airways, caused by an allergic reaction or sensitivity to inhaled particles, such as dust, pollen, or mould spores.

Early signs of equine asthma can be subtle, such as a dry cough, coughing at the start of exercise, finding faster work harder or a mild nasal discharge. As the condition progresses signs may include increased difficulty breathing, even at rest and pronounced coughing during exercise.

?

What are the signs?

Increased respiratory rate

Nasal discharge

Wheezing

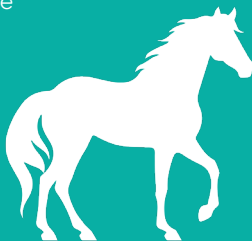
Heave lines

Coughing

Flared nostrils

Abdominal effort when breathing

Reduced exercise tolerance



14% of UK horses are affected by severe equine asthma*

* Pirie, R.S. (2018) Severe equine asthma—an overview. *Equine Health* (39)21-28

How is equine asthma diagnosed?

Your vet will discuss the best options for diagnosis with you. Diagnosis will start with a thorough examination, including listening to your horse's airways with a stethoscope and checking their temperature.

In some cases, your vet may recommend an endoscopic examination to assess your horse's airways, including collection of samples by tracheal wash or broncho-alveolar lavage (BAL).



Why is early diagnosis important?

Changes to the airways are reversible if equine asthma is diagnosed promptly

Environmental management

The goal of environmental management is to minimise your horse's exposure to allergens or airway irritants in their environment. This is a crucial part of managing equine asthma and can be extremely effective in helping to control signs.

Management changes to consider include:

- Increase turnout time in horses with dust or ammonia sensitivities
- Keep stables clean and well ventilated
- Avoid mucking out when your horse is in the stable
- Stable in the day, turn out at night for horses with pollen allergies
- Use low-dust bedding such as shredded paper or dust-extracted wood shavings
- Steam or soak hay prior to feeding

Medical management

There are two main types of medication that are used to treat equine asthma: bronchodilators (to open up the airways) and corticosteroids (to reduce airway inflammation).

- **Bronchodilators** act on the airways to reduce constriction, improve airflow to the lungs and make breathing easier. They do not reduce the underlying inflammation so will usually be prescribed in combination with steroids.
- **Corticosteroids** reduce airway inflammation and dampen the body's immune response to the asthma trigger.

For horses that are struggling with an acute flare-up, medication may be given by injection. This is usually followed up with oral or inhaled medication. Inhaled medication may be administered via a Flexineb® nebuliser or using a spacer device, such as the AeroHippus®.

Advantages of inhaled medication

- Delivers medication directly to the airways
- Fast response to treatment
- Minimal absorption into the bloodstream
- Fewer side effects compared to oral treatment

Why use the Flexineb®?

The Flexineb® is an easy-to-use nebuliser that produces a very fine mist of aerosolised medication or natural therapy solution, enabling delivery of medication direct to the lungs and lower airways.

- Fast treatment times (as little as 5 minutes)
- Flexible mask available in a range of sizes
- Lightweight and portable
- Battery or mains operated
- Silent in use with vibrating mesh technology

The Flexineb® E3 is a portable, silent equine nebuliser. Battery or mains-operated, it can be used for daily airway maintenance therapy and the targeted delivery of inhaled medication for the management of equine asthma.



www.breatheazy.co.uk

For more information contact Jon Slattery MRCVS, Sales Director
T 0330 053 5056 E enquiries@breatheazy.co.uk

