

# TETANUS IN DONKEYS

Learn about tetanus, a non-contagious disease caused by bacteria in the environment which can infect wounds and cuts.

 4 December 2017     [Read on The Donkey Sanctuary website](#)

Tetanus is a devastating disease that is caused by toxins (harmful substances) released by bacteria, which can be found in the soil. It is seen more in certain regions of the UK than in others and horses, ponies and donkeys are more susceptible to infection than other types of animals.

Tetanus can occur when the bacteria enters a cut or wound. It is commonly known as 'lockjaw' because the muscles of the mouth contract and become 'locked' and donkeys are unable to chew their food.

## WHAT ARE THE **SIGNS OF INFECTION?**

- A recent history of a wound including foot abscesses or a surgical wound, the wound may be so small that it has healed before you start to see any other signs
- A stiff or rigid appearance
- Excessive reaction to noises or touch
- Muscle spasms
- Flared nostrils
- Third eyelid across the eye
- Difficulty breathing
- Lying down or unable to stand.

## **WHEN SHOULD I VACCINATE** MY DONKEY AGAINST TETANUS?

Your vet will advise you on when to give the initial course and will help you with booking in boosters.

Foals can be vaccinated from five to six months old. When foals are born they have some protection passed on through their mother's milk, so it is important that pregnant mares are up to date with their vaccinations before they give birth.

New born foals are given an injection of Tetanus Antitoxin (TAT) to protect them against Tetanus until they are old enough to be vaccinated.

If your donkey gets a wound and you are unsure if their tetanus vaccination is up to date then speak to your vet immediately.

Treatment for tetanus once clinical signs are seen is difficult but there are things your vet can do in the early stages of infection to reduce the risk.

## MORE **INFORMATION**

We are not able to offer medical advice but our veterinary team offer a free peer-to-peer service for vets to discuss veterinary care and treatments based on individual cases.