



Animal Health Trust

media release

5 August 2015

Last call for horse owners to help revolutionise Equine Grass Sickness research

The Animal Health Trust, one of the UK's largest veterinary charities, is putting out a final call for horse owners across the UK to sign up to its ground-breaking Equine Grass Sickness (EGS) vaccine trial.

A debilitating disease affecting grazing horses, ponies and donkeys and almost always fatal, there is currently no known method of preventing EGS from striking. The EGS vaccine trial, launched in March 2014, has been designed to evaluate whether vaccination against *Clostridium botulinum* type C could be effective in reducing the risk of EGS, in the same way that vaccines are used successfully to prevent equine tetanus and botulism.

The EGS vaccine trial involves enrolled horses and ponies receiving either a course of the vaccine or an inactive placebo, as well as an annual booster. The incidence of EGS is monitored throughout the trial to determine the efficacy of the vaccine, and enrolled horses and ponies are closely monitored through regular follow-ups for the duration of the trial.

To be eligible to take part in the trial, horse owners need to be keeping their horses on premises that have had at least one case of EGS in the past three years and all horses or ponies must have a valid passport.

60% of EGS cases occur during April – June, meaning the highest risk season for EGS has just passed. The charity is concerned that those horse owners on premises that have been recently affected by the disease may not currently be aware of the trial and their eligibility to take part, and they are therefore in danger of missing out on the opportunity to help further research into EGS.

Dr Jo Ireland, the AHT's Equine Grass Sickness Research Coordinator, said, "For owners who have experienced the heartbreak of EGS first-hand, participating in the vaccine trial gives them an opportunity to further our understanding of EGS, and potentially help prevent this devastating disease in the future."

New premises must be enrolled by the end of August 2015, so this is the last chance for horse owners to sign up to the trial and provide an invaluable contribution to this pioneering research.

For more information and to sign up, visit www.equinegrasssickness.co.uk

For further information, please contact:

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Additional notes:

The Animal Health Trust (AHT) is an independent charity, employing over 200 scientists, vets and support workers. It aims to improve the health and welfare of horses, dogs and cats through research. It also provides specialist referral services and continuous education to vets. For more information, visit www.aht.org.uk