

Serological Allergy Tests

The Sensitest® allergy panels test for these potential allergens using a small sample of blood:

Environmental Panel IgE

GRASSES

Meadow Grass
Cocksfoot
Meadow Fescue
Red Top, bent grass
Rye, perennial
Sweet Vernal
Timothy

WEEDS

Daisy
Dandelion
Dock, yellow
Lamb's quarters
Mugwort
Nettle
Plantain
Ragweed
Red Clover

TREES

Alder
Ash (green, white)
Beech
Birch
Hazel
Hawthorn
Oak
Privet
Scotch Pine
Willow

DUST & MOULDS

Grain Mill Dust
Alternaria alternate
Aspergillus mix
Penicillium mix
Cladosporium
herbarum

Insect/Mites Panel IgE

STORAGE MITES

Lepidoglyphus destructor
Acarus siro
Tyrophagus
putrescentiae

DUST MITES

Dermatophagoides farinae
Dermatophagoides
pteronyssinus

INSECTS

Culicoides
Mosquito
Horse Fly
House Fly

Food Panel IgE and IgG

CEREALS

Wheat
Barley
Rye
Oats
Maize (corn)
Soyabean

OILS/SEEDS

Codfish/oil
Linseed (Flaxseed)

ROOTS/VEGETABLES

Sugar beet
Carrot
Pea

Ask your vet for
further information

SENSITEST®
the first choice in allergy

PRACTICE STAMP

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Ask your vet for a

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Allergies and Your Horse



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SENSITEST[®]
the first choice in allergy



What is an allergy?

An allergy is a reaction of the immune system to a common substance known as an allergen. Allergens include pollens from trees, grasses and flowering plants; insects, such as dust mites and midges; moulds and foods. If your horse is repeatedly exposed to an allergen their immune system will react, often resulting in poor health. The allergen enters the body by skin contact, inhalation or ingestion.

Allergic reactions can be immediate (classical) or occur within a few hours or days (delayed). Therefore, detection of which allergen(s) are causing the allergic reaction is extremely difficult.

What are the symptoms of allergy?

The most prevalent signs of allergy affecting horses and ponies are:

Skin signs

- Scratching, itching, rubbing - particularly mane, tail and poll
- Rashes, wheals, skin lesions, crusting, nettle rash
- Hair loss
- Thickened, scaly skin

Respiratory signs

- Headshaking
- Chronic cough
- Laboured breathing
- Nasal discharge
- Swollen, watery eyes

Gastrointestinal signs

- Diarrhoea
- Loss of appetite



What are the most common allergic diseases in horses?

Pruritus

Allergic skin disease that is highly itchy/scratchy. Frequently self trauma lesions ensue.

Summer dermatitis / eczema or "sweet itch"

This is a hypersensitivity to the saliva of the *Culicoides* species midge and occurs from Spring to Autumn when the midge is present. Small skin papules appear that often become lesions particularly at the base of the tail, mane and ears. Intense itching and irritability ensue and the subsequent rubbing to obtain relief, results in thickened skin and hair loss. Some breeds are predisposed such as the Welsh pony and Icelandic horse.



Urticaria

This is also known as **nettle rash** or **hives**. This presents as well demarcated circular elevations of the skin. Initially they pit under pressure, but become firmer lesions. They are very itchy and self trauma can lead to secondary infections.

Recurrent Airway Obstruction (RAO), Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

This is also known as **heaves**, or **equine asthma** and in chronic cases lead to broken wind. These respiratory diseases are due to the horse developing a hypersensitivity to inhaled allergens that generate an increase in mucus production and inflammation of the airways. These diseases are debilitating and if the condition remains undiagnosed and untreated it can cause the lung tissue to be irreversibly damaged.

Headshaking

Other abnormal behaviour observed in some horses, is often attributed to allergies, but there is a lack of published documentation.

How is it diagnosed?

The most difficult problem in all these allergic conditions is determining the allergen(s) that is causing the adverse reaction in the horse. Accurate diagnosis requires a complete and detailed history, full clinical examination, microbiology and allergy testing. Serological testing is a major aid to the diagnosis of equine allergies. It requires a small sample of blood to be taken by a veterinary surgeon. This is then sent to the Avacta Animal Health laboratory for analysis.

The Sensitest[®] allergy tests identify the level of antibodies in the blood that may correspond to the clinical signs of allergy. These results help pinpoint the offending allergen(s) and also the level of the reaction on a Class Score of 0-5. There are a range of tests and your veterinary surgeon will determine which are the most appropriate.

Treatment of Allergies

The Sensitest[®] results will provide a useful tool for the horse owner and veterinary surgeon to aid in the diagnosis of allergies and indicate the most suitable actions to take. If foods are identified, then a change of diet avoiding the problem foods is advisable. If environmental allergens such as pollens or insects are pinpointed, avoiding or controlling these are key. This can be more difficult; however there are methods of reducing the symptoms through medication or immunotherapy treatment for certain cases.

Immunotherapy Treatment

The aim of immunotherapy or desensitisation vaccines is to make the horse tolerant to the environmental allergens responsible for their symptoms by introducing increasing amounts of the allergens to which they are sensitive. The treatment is administered by subcutaneous injection. Adverse reactions are exceptionally rare. The initial treatment lasts for 10 months with a dosage regime that gradually increases until the maximum tolerate dose is reached.

This is followed by the maintenance treatment. The length of time for a response to be seen varies from horse to horse but varies between 4 and 12 months. Treatment may be continued for life as premature discontinuation may result in the symptoms recurring. The benefits of immunotherapy are that it has a very good success rate and obviates the need for long term medication such as steroids which can have serious side effects.

