

## Disease Reference: Botulism

Horses are more sensitive to botulism than any other domesticated animal species. The bacterium that causes this disease is ubiquitous in nature, especially in soil. Botulism occurs when toxins produced by the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum* enter a horse's body via a wound or, more commonly, through contaminated feed and water. The bacterium can be harbored in moldy feed; it can also grow on animal carcasses. Botulism can cause weakness, paralysis and death in horses. While an antitoxin exists for horses affected by the disease, it's costly and many die despite treatment. A vaccine to prevent botulism is also available; the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) recommends vaccination only in endemic areas, with special recommendations for foals. For more information, visit [www.aaep.org](http://www.aaep.org).