

SOUTH EAST COUNTRY VETS

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HOW TO GIVE AN INTRAMUSCULAR (IM) INJECTION TO A HORSE

PRECAUTIONS TO TAKE

- Handler – Giving injections is not without risk. Harm to the horse or yourself can easily occur if adequate care is not taken. Always wear gloves if directed by your veterinarian.
- Medication – Read the drug label thoroughly prior to giving any medications to ensure the directions are correct. Check the drug type, dose, route and expiry.
- Equipment – Always use a fresh sterile needle and syringe for each injection.

SITES FOR INTRAMUSCULAR INJECTIONS



• Base of the Neck

Draw a triangle between the shoulder, lower neck and mane and inject in the middle of this area. Aim to inject lower in the neck as opposed to high along the mane as neck pain and abscesses can develop if the nuchal ligament is injected into. Often a skin twitch next to the injection site can be useful for fidgety patients.



• Pectoral Muscle

These muscles are located in the lower chest/brisket area and are comprised of two large lobes. Ensure you stand close to the horse when using this area. The area may become sore with prolonged use.



• Gluteal Muscles

This is a large muscle that is frequently used for intramuscular injections. Rubbing or tapping the site prior to injection will partially desensitise the area for fidgety patients. Be aware that this can be a dangerous area in those horses prone to kicking.

PROCEDURE

- Draw up medication accurately as directed.
- Remove the needle from the syringe.
- Quickly and decisively insert the needle perpendicular to the skin. A fast stab is less painful for the patient. The entire length of the needle, up to the hub, should be inserted into the muscle.
 - Tips: - using a skin twitch (grabbing a portion of skin into the palm of your hand) can be very useful to take the attention away from what you are doing especially in the neck area
 - tapping the area firmly to partially desensitise is helpful for gluteal injections
- Attach the syringe to the needle.
- **Always draw back before injecting anything!** This means after placing the needle, you pull back on the plunger and ensure there is no blood in the syringe. If there is NO blood, it is safe to administer the medication. If there is blood, you MUST remove the needle and redirect into an area at least 1" away.
- Slowly administer the medication when in the correct location.
- Properly dispose of your needle and syringe in a safe medical waste container.

Note: if you are giving multiple injections or daily for several days, try to alternate sites each time.

This information sheet is not intended as a substitute for a veterinary consultation.

It is recommended that a consultation be arranged with a veterinary practitioner if you have any concerns with your horse's health.