



Equine VetCompass—UK Equine Health Surveillance

What is Equine VetCompass?

Equine VetCompass is an exciting Royal Veterinary College-led surveillance initiative that has been specifically developed to improve the monitoring of horse health and disease in the UK. The safeguarding of equine health and welfare relies upon accurate, population-level disease statistics, however these are currently in short supply. By working with a network of veterinary practices, **Equine VetCompass** will produce this much needed and valuable information.

How does Equine VetCompass work?

Veterinary practitioners are the ‘eyes and ears’ of the profession and as such practice clinical record systems house a wealth of disease data.

VetCompass promotes the use of this information for epidemiological research and, to facilitate this, has developed a system for the secure transfer of anonymised patient records from veterinary practices to a central database for analysis. This system already collects data from over 490 small animal practices and has now been adapted for use in equine practice.

The Equine VetCompass vision

Equine VetCompass, as an efficient and sustainable surveillance system, offers enormous potential for the ongoing practice-based study of equine health and disease.



Equine VetCompass has the capacity to examine the full array of:

- Infectious and non-infectious disorders
 - Acute and chronic conditions
 - Common and rare diseases
- generating reliable results of direct relevance for vets working in practice.

Equine VetCompass studies will be designed to fill knowledge gaps in equine medicine and surgery, producing practical disease and healthcare information that can be used to:

- Underpin and direct evidence-based veterinary medicine
- Assist the training of veterinary students and professionals
- Identify welfare and research priorities

What does it mean for participating practices?

Following enrolment, a software upgrade is provided by your practice management system provider. This is to embed the summary term (VeNom code) list, used to standardise ‘diagnosis’ recording, into your system and to enable the automated collection of anonymised clinical records.



To simplify analysis, we ask that following each episode of care, the patient record be tagged with the summary term that ‘best’ explains the reason for visit. This may be a procedural term, presenting sign or specific diagnosis and can be rapidly selected from the pre-installed list. Record tagging not only helps us, but also makes it easier for you to analyse your own caseload, e.g. for clinical auditing.

The summary term, along with associated demographic data, treatment details and clinical notes are then automatically transferred to the secure **Equine VetCompass** database for analysis.

Practices are asked to publicise project participation to their clients. This can be easily done through practice websites and social media; promotional posters and leaflets will also be provided for display in client waiting areas.

What does it mean for practice clients?

With regards to client consent for data-sharing, as only anonymised records are collected, the RCVS has agreed to **Equine VetCompass** operating under an ‘opt-out’ process. This means no further action is necessary for clients wishing to participate, however those *not* wanting to share their horse’s records are asked to notify the practice so that an ‘opt-out’ code can be applied to their account.

What information is collected?

Equine VetCompass collects anonymised clinical and demographic animal data only. This includes the summary term (VeNom code), free-text clinical notes and treatment details, along with age, sex, breed, microchip/passport number, insurance status and partial postcode. Animal names, client details and financial information are *not* shared.



How secure is the Equine VetCompass Database?

Equine VetCompass employs stringent protocols for the secure transfer and storage of data and fully complies with the Data Protection Act. The database holds anonymised information only and is password-protected.

What does the Equine VetCompass team use the data for?

Equine VetCompass conducts epidemiological research to determine the occurrence and distribution of disease, to identify risk factors influencing health status and to study clinical progression. This first study will estimate the prevalence of, and identify risk factors for, the most common conditions affecting the general horse population. However, the project offers unlimited potential for practice-based research.



Are project results truly anonymous?

Yes. As **Equine VetCompass** do *not* collect any sensitive animal or owner information, individuals are *not* identifiable in project results. Disease mapping is conducted to postal sector level (using partial postcode) only, preventing the identification of specific premises and individuals. **Equine VetCompass** also ensure complete practice anonymity.

How long will the project run for?

The **Equine VetCompass** project aims to grow and continue indefinitely. Results from this first study will serve as a benchmark, with the long-term monitoring of horse health necessary to detect new and changing threats to equine health.

For further details:

More information on **Equine VetCompass**, and other **VetCompass** projects can be found at www.rvc.ac.uk/vetcompass

Or for specific enquiries, please contact Sarah Allen by

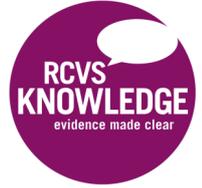
Email: seallen@rvc.ac.uk

Telephone: 01707 666012

Post: Equine VetCompass, Royal Veterinary College, Hawkshead Lane, North Mymms, Hertfordshire, AL9 7TA

How is the project funded?

Equine VetCompass is funded by the RVC Mellon Fund for Equine Research and RCVS Knowledge.



Has Equine VetCompass received ethical approval?

Yes. **Equine VetCompass** has been approved by the RVC's Clinical Research and Ethical Review Board (reference number: 2016 1460). In addition, the project has been reviewed and is supported by the RCVS.

How does Equine VetCompass benefit me?

- **Equine VetCompass** aims to become your 'knowledge hub'; a valuable source of disease and healthcare information that can be used to support evidence-based practice.
- Your improved practice management system will allow for the efficient evaluation of practice caseload. Useful for identifying potential areas for business growth, benchmarking performance and undertaking clinical audit.
- You will also have access to your practice's 'data silo' in the **Equine VetCompass** database where your shared records are stored in an easy-to-search format.
- Data-sharing with projects such as **Equine VetCompass** contributes towards the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme Award for Team and Professional Responsibility.
- Collaborating practices will be recognised with a hyperlinked logo on the **Equine VetCompass** webpage and acknowledged in all publications.
- Practices will receive regular project updates, personalised summaries of practice caseload and a shortened version of our findings.

