

Equine Newsletter – Summer 2017

Cushings Disease – subsidised testing time again!

Boehringer are again running a subsidised testing scheme for Cushings Disease - the offer runs from 1st June until the autumn and is open to any horse pony or donkey not previously tested. Symptoms such as a failure to lose winter coat, excessive sweating, increased thirst, lethargy, recurrent infections or unexplained laminitis all warrant investigation so please contact us to discuss further.

By offering the subsidised testing, Boehringer are able to collect data regarding the incidence of disease and most likely symptoms to give a positive test result- this in turn enables earlier diagnoses to be made in the future.

Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS) is another 'endocrine dysfunction' that can rear its head during the summer months. Again, laminitis can be one of the first symptoms – especially in the 'good doers' that rapidly develop a large crest or backside as soon as the grass comes through! Accumulation of abnormal amounts of fat leads to insulin resistance and onwards to a multitude of problems. Strict diet and medication to block glucose absorption will reverse the condition – unlike Cushings Disease which is a lifelong illness, EMS can be cured.

Weight watchers for horses

So, how do you tackle the problem of the 'good doer'?

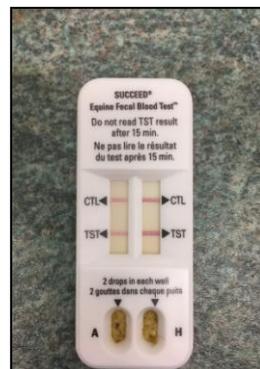
- Keep them on very small paddocks already eaten down?
- Buy a grazing muzzle and get them to wear it for most of the day?
- Keep them in off the grazing for many hours a day?
- Increase their exercise to use up some of the excess calories?



There is no easy answer but the first step is to monitor weight and condition. Scales are more accurate than a weigh tape but even that will allow you to check progress throughout the season. If you would like further advice please ring.

Whilst on the subject of diet, please remember horses are 'trickle' feeders and are designed to forage for food for 10-12 hours a day. Studies have shown that intake is least between 3am and 9am so overnight turn out may be more beneficial than first thought.

Too much restriction of forage can lead to other issues if horses are fed too much concentrate or cereal based diets at the same time. We have diagnosed several cases of gastric ulceration in the last few months and have been surprised by the severity of damage to the stomach lining. Horses can be quite stoical and may not show major clinical signs until inflammation is well established. Subtle changes in behaviour, girthing pain, a reluctance to perform and reduced appetite may be the first pointers to a problem – especially in horses exposed to 'stress'. Stress includes chronic (unmanaged) pain, a change in ownership, increased exercise or travelling or an alteration in routine. Strict routine at feeding can increase anxiety especially if the clock runs late!



Fresh faecal samples can be tested for traces of blood indicative of gastric or hindgut bleeding, but the definitive test is gastroscopy – we can arrange this to be carried out at home. Starvation for 10-12 hours is required prior to examination in order that the stomach is empty for a clear view.

The procedure takes approximately 45 minutes and requires sedation. Once identified, treatment is very effective together with the adoption of management changes.



In the News...

Work from one of Berlin's leading universities has demonstrated that Equine Herpes virus is capable of surviving in water for up to three weeks. It was previously thought that viruses were too fragile to live outside the host animal and needed aerosol spread for transmission. This may explain outbreaks where direct horse to horse transmission has not occurred.

The British Horseracing Authority has imposed a limit to the level of cobalt found in horse's urine. Although a trace element, cobalt may have the ability to improve performance. However, too much can be detrimental to health and therefore should be supplemented with care in all animals.



Research into tendon injuries across the equine industry has found that conditioning exercise done whilst a horse is maturing benefits long term resilience.

The superficial flexor tendon for example will respond well to light exercise up to the age of two years, after that its ability to improve decreases. Discussions on how to manage young horses to avoid future injury are essential for welfare.

Passports and Regulations

Please ensure you complete the relevant section of your horse's passport to confirm exclusion from the food chain. In order for drugs such as Bute to be prescribed we **MUST** know and record that you have done so. If you prefer the option for slaughter for human consumption we can only legally prescribe drugs with a known meat withhold time and this can lead to difficulties especially in emergency situations.

Please check your passport and if in any doubt ask us to advise further.



Where are you?



Remember to keep us updated about where you keep your horses. A post-code would be helpful too.

Don't wait for that emergency visit!

Also, make sure we have your correct contact numbers.

Equine Vaccination Reminders

Vaccination reminders will now be sent out via an automated system. They do not come directly from the surgery, so it is essential that we have your correct email address and mobile phone number. These will be tried first. Postal reminders will be the final attempt.

However, the Practice cannot be held responsible for any lapse in vaccinations. We endeavour to issue reminders, but it is ultimately your responsibility to ensure your horse's vaccination regime is kept up-to-date



New voices on the phone and new faces to meet!

Amy and Sophie are the friendly voices you will hear when calling reception or visiting the office.

They are assisted by Georgie and Emma who both also help with drug deliveries and lend a hand to vets during operations or diagnostic procedures.

Heather will be off on maternity leave soon and we wish her good luck.

Protocol for contacting vets out of hours

In an emergency, please call the usual surgery number 01905 773262 and press option 2 for farm/equine line. You will be put in touch with the "on call" Vet to organise a visit, or to get advice.

Our Vets are generally happy to hand out their mobile phone details – this is great for ongoing case discussions. However, in cases where a visit may be required please don't leave a voicemail - always use the surgery number. The office staff organise the vets' rounds and need to know of any potential visits. They can also advise if a particular vet is on annual leave. Please remember that despite advances in technology voicemail messages and texts do not appear to be 100% reliable – sometimes being delivered hours after being sent!