

ISSUE 22 Summer 2024

Equine NEWS

www.paragonvet.com



Inside this issue:

- Laminitis
- Bringing your horse back from a break
- You ask, we answer! - Hay - to feed or to not feed?

 **equine**
paragon
VETERINARY GROUP



COMPASSION, CARE AND CLINICAL EXCELLENCE



Our cover stars

On the cover this month is Frankie (bay) 1yr and Bobby (black) 13yrs, owned by Sarah Litherland.

Sarah sais 'Bobby has been teaching Frankie the ways of life as a Shetland.. not always so sweet and innocent!

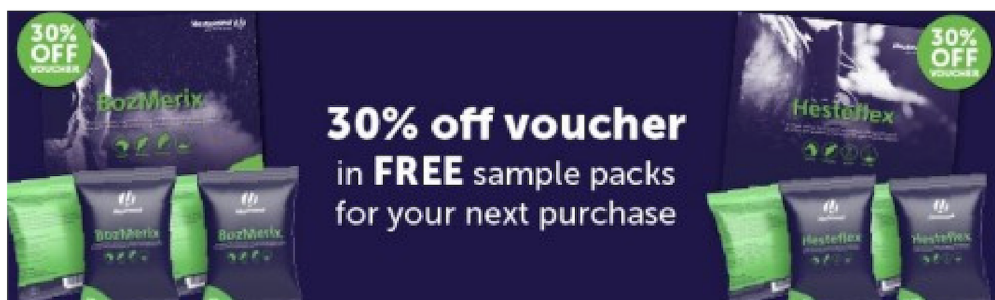
Bobby greets me every time I go to the yard. Both are very happy ponies.'

****Equine Supplements ****

If you would like to try a FREE sample of one of the Hestevard supplement that we stock at the practice, please scan the QR code.

The pack contains 2 free sachets and a discount voucher for your next purchase.

Please speak to one of the equine vets if you require further information.



At the end of May we welcomed Emma Trott . Emma, originally from Devon, graduated from Bristol Vet school and since then has worked in practices in Gloucestershire and Stirling, Scotland. She is extremely excited to join Paragon's Equine team and get to know the area. Emma enjoys all aspects of equine practice, in particular medicine, poor performance and dentistry. She is currently working towards her certificate in advanced veterinary practice in medicine.

When not in work you can expect to find her out walking, especially if there is a good coffee shop nearby! She also enjoys running weekly parkruns and she's looking forward to joining a local running club.

Staffing update





By Bethan Harper

Laminitis

Laminitis is the term used to describe inflammation of the sensitive tissues (lamellae) which attach the hoof capsule to the underlying coffin bone.

Over time this inflammation can cause the laminae to stretch and separate which allows the bone to sink deeper into the foot and rotate.

In extreme cases this can lead to founder which is when the bone penetrates through the sole of the foot. Typically laminitis affects more than one foot, with the front feet more severely affected, although this depends on the type of laminitis occurring.

The most common form of laminitis is metabolic; although horses may also suffer from inflammatory laminitis or overload laminitis. Metabolic laminitis occurs due to an inability to regulate carbohydrate metabolism resulting in an abnormally high insulin response to starches or sugars. High levels of insulin in the blood causes damage to lamellar cells resulting in laminitis. The main causes of insulin dysregulation in horses are pars pituitary intermedia dysfunction (PPID, or equine cushing's disease) and equine metabolic syndrome (EMS).



Diet is another aspect that needs to be considered when managing a laminitic horse or pony, particularly where the laminitis is secondary to metabolic disease. Restricting carbohydrates in feed will help to reduce damaging rises in insulin. The best thing to feed is hay that has been soaked for 12 hours to remove the sugars. Avoid giving treats as these are often full of sugar, and if any supplementary feed is required, a straw based chaff could be used, or a low calorie balancer if extra minerals are needed. Always check the feed label to ensure that what you are buying is actually low carbohydrate as many feeds that are marketed as 'laminitis safe' will still have a high percentage of carbohydrate in them.



Inflammatory, or toxic laminitis occurs due to systemic inflammation and a buildup of toxins in the bloodstream which causes weakening of the lamellae. This may occur due to a gorging of concentrate foods high in starch, for example if your naughty pony breaks into the feed room! An excess of carbohydrate rich food overwhelms the digestive system, leaving a lot of undigested feed to enter the hindgut where it is then fermented. This process is extremely damaging to the gut and can cause profuse

diarrhoea and the release of toxins into the bloodstream. Other causes of toxicity include certain types of colic, colitis, retained placentas in post-partum mares, and pleuropneumonia.

Diagnosis of laminitis is usually possible by gathering a thorough history and performing a clinical examination. Additional testing to help determine the cause may also be necessary, such as blood tests to diagnose PPID or EMS. In ongoing cases it may be helpful to take x-rays of the feet to assess the angle of the pedal bone in addition to the sole depth and toe length. These can also be useful for your farrier, as foot trimming is an important part of the remediation process.



The first priority for treating laminitis is pain management. If you suspect your horse or pony may have laminitis you should restrict their movement (box rest is ideal) and arrange for a vet to come and examine them. Your vet will most likely give them an anti-inflammatory pain relief while they are there followed by a course for you to give them daily. Walking on the weakened lamellae is not only painful but also increases the risk of a full detachment. For this reason, box rest is usually recommended with a deep soft bed to help support the feet. Other support options include pads and special boots, which can be discussed with your vet and farrier. If an underlying cause for the laminitis is identified, such as PPID, this should also be treated and appropriate management followed.

Overload laminitis is relatively uncommon and occurs when horses or ponies put an abnormal amount of weight through one of their legs. This is usually secondary to an injury or lameness causing them to be non weight bearing in the contralateral limb. For example, a horse with a fracture of their left foreleg may overcompensate with their right foreleg leading to overload laminitis in the right front foot.

Laminitis is extremely painful which is reflected in the clinical signs of the disease. Horses or ponies with laminitis may be reluctant to move and will walk with a stilted or 'pottery' gait. They also struggle more when turning.

When at rest these patients will typically weight shift and rock onto their heels to try to take the weight off their toes. Often there is heat in the affected feet with increased digital pulses and a painful response to hoof testers. In chronic cases you may be able to see diverging hoof rings due to deformity of the hoof wall.

If you require feed guidance, many companies have experienced nutritionists available to recommend the most appropriate feed for your horse or pony.

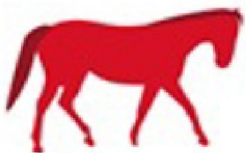
Below is a graphic taken from the BHS website demonstrating the signs of laminitis.



Reluctance to turn



Change in behaviour / temperament



A shortened stride / a stiffened gait



Reluctant to pick up their feet



Shifting weight from foot to foot



Abnormal heat at the hoof wall or coronet

General template to bring your horse back from a break.

Week 1: 10 minutes walking exercise 5 times during the week on a hard surface (eg road work)

Week 2: 20 minutes of walk and 10 minutes of trot 5 times during the week on a hard surface, including hills where possible and safe.

Week 3: 45 minutes of work 5 times during the week, at least half an hour of which should be trot on a hard surface. Hill work should still be included.

Week 4: One hour of work 5 times during the week, 2 x 5 minute bursts of canter can now be included in these sessions. Hill work is still recommended.

Week 5: One hour of work 5 times during the week, 2 x 10 minute bursts of canter can be included. Hill work is still recommended.

Week 6: Gentle schooling can be introduced slowly during this week. Sessions should be kept to 1 hour 5 times during the week and no jumping should be included yet. Keep the sessions varied between schooling and hacking.

Week 7: Schooling should be continued aswell as hacking, each session should last for 1 hour 5 times during the week, start to ask for a bit more each time. Canter work should now be at least 15 minute bursts. Cantering up hill can also be included at short bursts.

Week 8: Jumping can slowly be introduced to the schooling work. Cantering can be taken up to 20 minutes at a time and uphill bursts can be extended. Keep the work load to 1 hour 5 times during the week.

Week 9: Continue as week 8 but slowly add in more demanding jumping sessions and faster work e.g. bursts of gallop at 2 minutes to begin with, increasing this slowly over time.

Week 10: Start to introduce cross country fences, increase the bursts of gallop and allow sessions of faster canter work to increase to 20 minutes. Keep variation by continuing with more demanding schooling sessions.

Week 11: Practise cross country courses at the speed necessary for your level of competition. The horse should be competition fit prior to competing, not gaining fitness at competition. Practise dressage tests and show jumping courses in the arena.

Week 12: If you have your first competition at the end of this week, undertake your cross country work at the beginning of the week and work towards practising your dressage test at the end of the week to ensure your horse is fresh for competition.

You ask, we answer!

Do horses out at grass need hay provided over the summer?

There may be need to supplement with hay when;

- the pasture is poor quality
- the horses on the pasture aren't thriving
- there is a mare supporting a foal
- the horses on the pasture are of a non native breed
- the horse is in hard work

In almost all cases native pony breeds turned out 24/7 will not need hay supplementation in summer months.

What are the signs to look out for that indicate you should be feeding hay?

Signs to indicate that hay supplementation is necessary include:

- horses losing weight beyond an acceptable body condition score (2.5/5 at this time of year is ideal)
- poor weather conditions when the pasture is not ideal and little to no shelter is available - supplementing hay in these conditions helps to keep the horses warm.

It is important to note that if horses or ponies are overweight the hay supplementation will not be necessary.

For horses stabled part of the time and turned out part of the time, how can owners decide how much hay to feed?

This should be decided by how the horse is maintaining their weight. Ideally, hay should have a sugar content of 11% or less and if a horse is overweight it should be fed no more than 1.5% of its bodyweight in hay weight per day if this is the horses sole dietary intake. This calculation does not take into account how much grass is being consumed, a horse/ pony can consume its daily requirement of grass in a matter of hours! Obviously if the horse is turned out on grass at some point during the day then most of this hay ration can be removed from the diet.

The pasture condition and horses body condition score should be taken into account and horses should be fed in a manner to maintain their body condition at an ideal score (2.5/5, at this time of year).

The condition of the pasture will change through the summer depending on weather conditions so hay rations should be changed alongside this. If pasture is thriving then the hay ration should be cut down.

If grass is grazed down short, do they need hay? Or are they getting enough by eating the fresh shoots of grass as they are coming up.

Just because the grass is grazed short, horses do not necessarily need hay supplementation. A paddock can look very short but in summer weather, but the grass will grow and be eaten off by the horses as it is growing. Therefore the newest shoots of grass, the most nutritious parts, are the parts being constantly eaten off by the horses. This means that in good weather horses can obtain all of their nutrition needs from a very bare looking paddock. Again, hay supplementation should be provided depending on how the horses are maintaining their weight. An overweight horse will likely not need hay supplementation but if horses appear to be losing excessive weight to the point that they are now appearing to be underweight, hay supplementation may be necessary. Breed and workload should be taken into account again when deciding on whether to supplement hay or not.

If you have any questions for our upcoming Autumn newsletter, please email them to melanie.gray@paragonvet.com.

Scan the QR code using your phone's camera to access our past newsletters!



Paragon Veterinary Group
Carlisle House,
Townhead Road, Dalston,
Carlisle, CA5 7JF
Tel: (01228) 710208
vets@paragonvet.com

Paragon Veterinary Group
Newbiggin, Stainton,
Penrith,
CA11 0HT
Tel: (01768) 483789
vets@paragonvet.com