

ISSUE 1 Spring 2019

# Equine NEWS

[www.paragonvet.com](http://www.paragonvet.com)



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Equine

COMPASSION, CARE AND CLINICAL EXCELLENCE

Welcome to our new look newsletter. We will continue to publish our equine newsletters quarterly but they will now contain more clinical content and practice updates.

On the cover this Spring is Brackenbank Rosebud who is due to foal in early May. She is owned by David and Katherine Wilkinson.

Please email [equine@paragonvet.com](mailto:equine@paragonvet.com) if you have any topic suggestions for either the newsletter or Facebook page.

## **STAFF NEWS**

### **KRISTEN HOLLAND**

I started at Paragon as an equine vet in the middle of February.

I have always wanted to be an equine vet and graduated from the Royal Veterinary College in the Summer of 2019. I then went on to intern at an equine hospital in Staffordshire for 6 months before joining Paragon. My main veterinary interests include lameness, breeding, dentistry and colic.



Having grown up with horses I have had a go at everything from pony club through to polocrosse. When I'm not at work I enjoy exploring the lake District with my partner Matt and dog Quest, baking and rowing.

Kristen and Matt also got engaged earlier in February so congratulations from everyone at Paragon!

## **OUT OF HOURS**

Just to remind everyone that we now offer full out of hours equine only veterinary cover.

To speak to the equine vet on duty please call either Newbiggin on 017684 8378 or Dalston on 01228 710208 and select option 3.

## NEWS

**FLU OUTBREAK AND VACCINE AMNESTY****Paul May—BVMS MRCVS**

As this 2019 equine flu outbreak continues to run its course through the UK, there continue to be daily confirmed cases, but at the time of writing nothing has been confirmed in our area.

It has been encouraging to see the uptake of vaccination in the face of the challenge, the second doses of the primary course are now due and we can expect a good level of protection to develop in the week following that dose. This particular strain of the virus is managing to overcome vaccine protection in some cases, but so long as animals are healthy in all other respects and are not working hard, vaccination will prevent serious disease. Allowing a week off after vaccination will minimise the impact that vaccination has on energy levels, however horses in training may need two to three weeks off from competition to avoid complications.

So far we have swabbed almost 100 horses around our area all of which have come back negative. These all had some link to the racing yard cases or represented a risk that warranted investigation. That is encouraging news as some horses were clearly at risk but did not become infected. The continued movement of horses means that we cannot relax and as the spring and summer approach they will bring fresh challenges on that front. If you would like to discuss your situation or suspect anything, please contact us and we will be happy to help. It is very important that we all remain vigilant and investigate anything suspicious.

We are running a vaccine amnesty until the 15th March. Any horses that start or re-start their primary vaccine courses will receive the 2nd dose FREE.

For further information please speak to one of the equine team

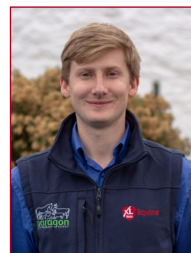
 A promotional graphic for a horse vaccination amnesty. It features a photograph of two brown horses standing in a field. The text on the graphic includes:
 

- PROTECT YOUR HORSE WITH REDUCED COST VACCINATION!**
- OVER HALF OF THE UK HORSE POPULATION IS UNPROTECTED. IS YOUR HORSE ONE OF THEM?
- THE VACCINATION AMNESTY**
- Brought to you by: **KBHH** (Kent Bloodstock & Horse Health)
- \*This campaign is only available to horses on the premises of a participating practice. It is not available to horses that have been vaccinated elsewhere.

## ECTOPARASITES

**Rob Peckham - BVMedSci (hons) BVM BVS (hons) MRCVS**

Horse and ponies can be affected by a variety of external parasites, however the most common are lice and mites. Whilst both affect the skin, there are important differences between them.



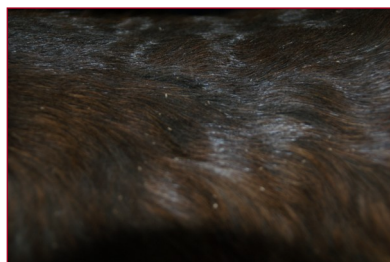
### **Lice**

These are larger than mites; usually between 1.5-5mm depending on the type of louse. There are two main types of louse, the sucking louse (*Haematopinus Asini*) and the chewing louse (*Damalinia Equis*).

- Sucking lice are larger and are found at the base of the mane and tail. They get their name, as they feed by sucking blood through the skin.
- Chewing lice are smaller and are more commonly found on the flanks and neck. They feed off dead skin by 'chewing' at the top layer. This can cause intense itching and irritation.



Lice are common during the winter, as they thrive in thick winter coats. They live their whole life on the horse. Mature lice lay eggs that then take 2-3 weeks to hatch. Horses with lice are usually itchy, they often rub their manes and tails or chew at themselves. Coats are often seen as dull and flaky, with careful examination the adults can often be seen moving in the coat!



Treatment is usually easy, using a spray, shampoo or spot on. The applications usually contain *permethrin* or *pyrethroids* which kill the adults. As the treatments only kill the adults and not the eggs, it is important to retreat after 14 days. Your vet can advise which treatment is most appropriate for your horse.

### **Mites**

Feather mites (*Chorioptes Equi*) are a common parasite of horses. These are much smaller than lice and a microscope is needed to see them. They are most commonly found on the legs of heavily feathered horses where they burrow deep into the skin causing intense itching. The disease that they cause is called Chorioptic Mange. Similar to lice, it takes 2-3 weeks for the eggs to hatch.

Affected horses often have very itchy legs, and will be seen scratching, chewing and stamping their feet. Sore areas can then appear around the pastern and fetlock, which then with time can become very thickened.

Samples would need to be taken by your vet and then looked at under a microscope for diagnosis. However even after doing this they are not always found. Instead the response to treatment is the best diagnosis.

Treatment can be difficult and frustrating compared to lice. This is because not all horses with mites show clinical signs, they then re-infect other horses. Mites can also survive for a few days off the horse in damp conditions so it is important to clean and disinfect the stable after treatment.

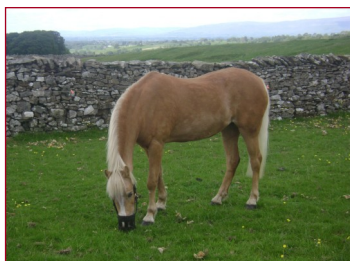
There are no licensed treatments for mites, however *doramectin* injections are often administered by vets off license after a discussion about the side effects. Again like lice it is important to re-treat horses 2-3 weeks later to kill any mites which have hatched after treatment. Other off license treatments such as topical *fipronil* sprays and washing with *sulphur* or *Ivermectin* can also help one the feathers have been clipped off.



### **COMPLIMENTARY CUSHING'S DISEASE (PPID) TESTING**

Throughout the year we are able to offer FREE laboratory fees for PPID testing on horses that have not previously been tested or that are not previously on veterinary treatment for Cushing's Disease.

Owners will need to visit [www.careaboutcushings.co.uk](http://www.careaboutcushings.co.uk) to sign up and apply for a voucher. The voucher code will need to be given to the vet when they come to take a blood sample.



The website also has lots of useful information about the disease.

Please speak to one of the equine team if you have any questions or would like to discuss whether testing would be beneficial for your horse.



## **BREEDING FROM YOUR MARE**

**Kristen Holland - BVetMed (hons) MRCVS**



There are many factors to consider when selecting a mare for breeding. The ideal mare is sound, of a good body condition score (2.5-3.5/5), aged between 4 and 12 years old and in good general health. This is not always possible so if your mare falls outside of this description then we are happy to discuss the best approach to breeding her with you.

### **The equine cycle**

Mares are seasonally polyoestrus, this means that they will start to release eggs from the ovaries in a cyclic manner (every 21-24 days) when the daylight hours lengthen. They will then stop releasing eggs when the daylight hours shorten again. The increase in daylight hours stimulates the extra release of hormones from the brain, this in turn stimulates follicle growth in the ovaries and the release of further hormones which drive cyclicity. The main breeding season in the UK runs from approximately March to August, with breeding being possible in months outside of this in some mares.



Ultrasound scanning enables us to see when the mare begins to cycle. We look to see which structures are present on her ovaries and what oedema pattern is present in her uterus. Adding this information together and scanning her sequentially will allow us to predict when she will begin to come into season (oestrus).

Before presenting your mare for reproductive evaluation it is important for you to research how you would like your mare to be covered. The first step is to choose your stallion. After this, the type of covering needs to be chosen. Only certain types of cover will be available for each stallion due to how well his semen freezes or chills and breed society regulations.

### **Natural covering**

Natural covering can present a degree of risk to the mare and the stallion, however semen will survive for the longest period of time in the mare (approximately 5 days) when covering naturally. This means that the mare can be covered when she is in standing oestrus which lasts approximately 5 days and a more accurate diagnosis of the stage of her cycle is not always necessary. Before covering pre-breeding swabs and blood tests should be taken to ensure that disease will not be spread between the mare and the stallion.

### Artificial Insemination (AI)

If AI using chilled or frozen semen is chosen, a more accurate diagnosis of the mares cycle stage is necessary. We advise that mares should stay with us for scanning, sometimes once or twice daily. This enables us to measure the size of her dominant follicle and the oedema pattern in her uterus. We can then induce ovulation (release of the egg) at the optimum time with an injection, this creates a peak in the hormone levels which normally stimulate natural ovulation. This enables us to pin point the time of ovulation and to inseminate the mare at the best possible time to hopefully obtain a pregnancy. This is especially important as chilled and frozen semen have a much shorter timeframe whilst the sperm is still active.

After insemination it is important for us to scan the mare again (usually the following day) to assess the level of fluid within her uterus, we will then perform a uterine washout. Often the fluid gathers as a reaction to the semen, this is more common with frozen semen and when the mare has been inseminated as late as possible before ovulation. Because of the changes in hormone balance it is important to try to remove this fluid and washout the uterus with a sterile solution to prevent infection or inflammation of the uterine lining. Mares can then return home until their first pregnancy scan or be left quietly in our paddocks

### Pregnancy diagnosis

The first pregnancy scan can be performed at 14 days post insemination, at this point we will check for twins. Twin pregnancy is dangerous in the mare and can often lead to abortion. If twins are found at this stage, one of the pregnancies will be manually crushed. This carries a risk to the other pregnancy too, however action is required if twins are diagnosed. A rescan one week later would be recommended to determine if the other pregnancy is still viable. If a single pregnancy has been detected at 14 days, a 'heartbeat' scan at 28 days will be advised to assess the viability and progression of the pregnancy. Mares previously carrying twins will also be checked again at this stage. Generally mares are not checked again following the second scan unless owners have any concerns. Most mares will then go on to foal approximately 340 days later (11 months).

If your mare does not hold to insemination she will continue to cycle and come back into season. The insemination process can then be repeated.

It is a long and often expensive journey from insemination to foaling so doing your research would definitely be advised. However breeding can be a very rewarding process, seeing your mare with a healthy foal in the field is a beautiful sight.



For further information about breeding and the artificial insemination service that we offer please speak to one of the equine team.

## SPRING WORMING

As we are now heading into Spring we recommend that worm egg counts (WEC) are again sent in for testing. Due to recent concerns over mass encysted small red worm emergence we are advising that any horses, ponies or donkeys that have not been treated over the winter with a *moxidectin* based wormer are done during early March.

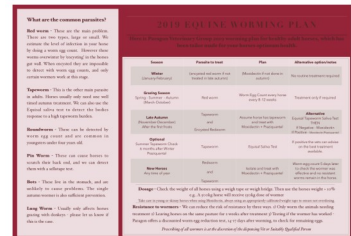
During March and April we are running a WEC promotion. We will examine your horse's faecal sample for £9.60, if the result is positive you will then receive a FREE wormer. Please drop samples off at either Newbiggin or Dalston receptions in a sealed container or bag that is labelled with your name, phone number, horse's name and age.

Once the sample has been tested we will give you a call with the result and follow up advice once the sample has been tested.



For more information on worming please have a look at our 2019 worming plan on the website. This includes advice on treatment and testing for the year. We now offer a range of worm egg count packages and treatment plans.

Please speak to the equine team for further information.



## Contact us:

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