

ISSUE 11 Autumn 2021

Equine NEWS

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Equine

COMPASSION, CARE AND CLINICAL EXCELLENCE

On the cover this Autumn is Gyro Steady Eddie who is owned and much loved by Sammy Holme, who is also 6yro. It takes Steady Eddie a moment to recover from his snooze and he gets into this position every time!

Please email equine@paragonvet.com if you have any topic suggestions for either the newsletter or Facebook page.



STAFF NEWS



Sadly Euan left us at the end of July to move back to Northumbria with his new wife Henri. He will be greatly missed but we wish them both the very best for the future.

Selina started with us at the beginning of August as a newly graduated equine vet. She is settling in well and is now getting out and about on a few calls.

Sian also started back with us at the beginning of August following her maternity leave with son Hari. We're very pleased to have her back supporting the team.

Charlotte is continuing to support the equine veterinary team on a Wednesday and Friday alongside her large animal work on a Tuesday.

****AUTUMN DENTAL OFFER****

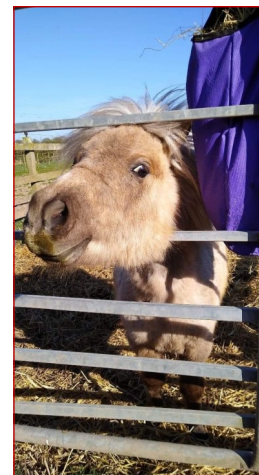
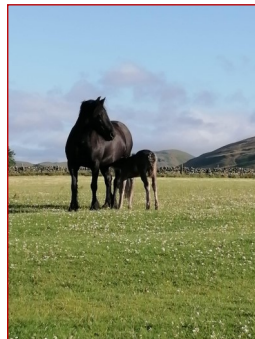
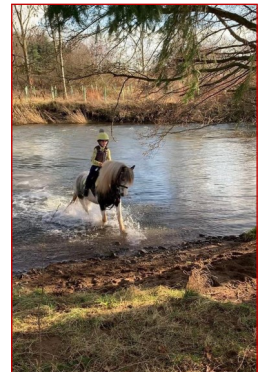
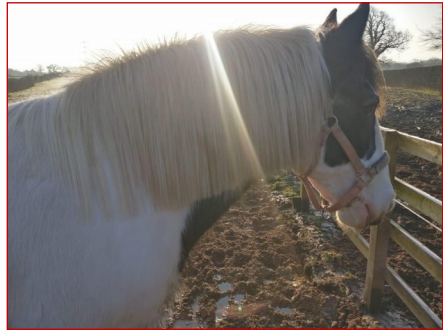
October and November see the return of our Autumn dental offer. During these months we will be offering a 15% discount on any routine equine dentals done (*including sedation*). The dentals can be done either at the Newbiggin Practice or on your own yard (*normal visit fees apply*)

We offer FREE equine dental checks all year round. If you are not sure whether your horse requires a dental any of the vets will be happy to have a look.



We had a really tough decision deciding on the Autumn cover star. A selection of our other favourite pictures are below.





GASTRIC ULCERS - MANAGING SEASONAL CHANGES

Paul May - MRCVS BVMS



Detecting gastric ulcers and trying to sign a severity to the findings remains an area of concern for horse owners and equine vets. The signs can be vague, common to a number of issues, or may be more specific, helping to form a tentative diagnosis before gastroscopy is performed. Once diagnosed, a treatment plan is devised that will depend on the following:

- The type of ulcers present
- The extent and severity of lesions
- What is suspected to be the cause
- Other health issues that the horse may have

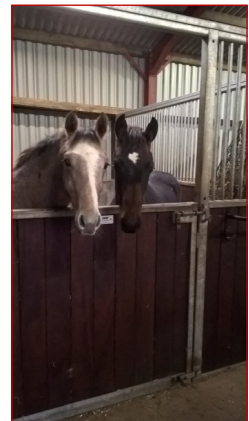
The summer should be a remission time for horses showing signs of active ulceration, they are more likely to be turned out, the food intake may be predominantly easily digested, soft grass and they are more likely to be enjoying more freedom of movement in a herd situation. As we approach winter, many if not all of these change:

- The main source of fibre becomes tougher
- There may be more reliance on starch based feeds
- There will probably be more time spent standing indoors.

All of these will contribute to a potential worsening of ulcers.

So there are some changes to management practices that may improve the comfort of gastric ulcer cases, particularly those in work:

- Try to avoid large starch based feeds, divide them into 4 - 6 smaller ones through the day
- Feed roughage before exercise and before high starch feeds
- Feeding alfalfa may help gastric comfort but avoid sharp chaffs
- Replace at least some of the starch with oil
- Always ensure an adequate supply of fresh drinking water, avoiding freezing in very cold temperatures which will interrupt supply and make drinking less likely
- Avoid over feeding of electrolytes, when needed incorporate them into an oily feed
- Maximise turnout time
- Ensure there is suitable company whenever possible, especially at high stress times such as travelling
- There are a number of supplements available so talk to your vet about those
- Following diagnosis use appropriate medication as part of the management plan.



HORSE INFLUENZA AND TETANUS VACCINES EXPLAINED

Charlotte Pennington - BVetMed (hons) MRCVS



Influenza (Flu) and Tetanus are diseases that we recommend routinely vaccinating your horses against:

Flu – is a contagious viral infection affecting the respiratory system. It causes symptoms such as a fever, runny nose and cough although rarely fatal it can be quite debilitating.

Tetanus – is usually a fatal condition caused by toxins released from spores of a bacteria called *clostridium tetani*. These spores are normally found in the environment and enter the body tissue via wounds etc to cause disease.

There are various options for vaccine schedules including Flu only and Tetanus only, however it is recommended to use a combined schedule for maximum protection against both these diseases.

FLU AND TETANUS COMBINED - Recommended Schedule - Primary Course (3 injections)

1st Vaccine (flu and tetanus) - given from 6 months of age

2nd Vaccine (flu and tetanus) - 4 weeks (manufacturer guidelines) or 21-92 days (Jockey Club rules) after the 1st vaccine was given

3rd Vaccine (flu only) - 5 months (manufacturer guidelines) or 150-215 days (Jockey Club rules) after the 2nd vaccine was given

Annual Boosters - following on from the primary course, horses should have an annual booster, <365 days since the last vaccine. This will alternate between flu and flu/ tetanus combined as tetanus boosters are only required every 2 years.

Full restarts (i.e. full primary course again) are needed if more than 365 days has passed since the last booster so count backwards 1 year from the last vaccination, if this is over one year then a restart and full primary course is needed again. Equine flu vaccination rules are very strict!



What about the 6 month Rule? The 6 monthly flu booster rule has been implemented by the FEI for many years and was brought into place nationally following the 2019 outbreak of Equine Flu. Although the mass outbreak has now passed, equine flu is still endemic (always present) in the UK. There has since been variation in what is required for competitions and it is always worth checking with your organisation and the competition venue as to what is required.

The “6-month” vaccination is only currently required by certain organisations who govern competitions (for example British Eventing (BE). Their requirement is that the latest **vaccination must have been given WITHIN 6 months and 21 days of the competition you wish to attend**. The flu booster **does not have to be done within 6 months of the latest vaccination** to remain eligible; it entirely depends on the competition date!

Remember flu boosters can be left for anything up to 12 months so missing one of these 6 month boosters does not require a full re-start as long as you are within the 365 days since the last flu booster.

SUMMARY

Annual flu boosters - must be done <365 days since the last vaccine, failure to boost within this time frame results in a full re-start.

Tetanus boosters - should be done every 2 years and can be given as a combined vaccine with flu.

For the “6-month” rule - count backwards from the competition date, and if the most recent vaccine was more than 6 months and 21 days, then a booster will be required to compete under certain competition governing bodies such as BE.

No injection should be given 7 days before the competition.

Remember flu vaccine regulations are very strict. So even a lapse by only days is considered a breach in regulations which can result in the inability to compete and the need to restart flu vaccines.

**** We strive to send out vaccination reminders for 2nd, 3rd and annual vaccinations. However as these are computer generated they can occasional be missed or incorrect. Therefore can we remind owners that it is your responsibility to check when your horses vaccines are due and to ensure that they don't exceed the required time frame. ****

MANAGEMENT OF THE OVERWEIGHT HORSE

Freya Wood - BVSC MRCVS



Obesity in our horses, ponies and donkeys is detrimental to their health, increasing their risk of laminitis and hyperlipaemia amongst other health issues. We are now seeing more issues with overweight horses than we are with those that are underweight.

The way horses are managed has changed so there is no longer a seasonal variation in weight. Naturally horses store fat during the spring and summer months to use in the winter where, in the wild food, would be more scarce. As we supplement our horses diets this does not occur, leading to a cycle of increasing weight year upon year.

Managing an overweight horse can present a challenge as it requires changes to their management. There is no “one size fits all” approach, and what works for one owner and their horse may not work for another.

To tackle this issue we need to look at 4 areas:

REDUCING GRAZING - this can be the area that presents the biggest challenge, particularly when the grazing land is not your own. If you have your own land (or a land owner willing to change the layout of the paddocks), create smaller areas to graze at a time using electric fencing or a track system which will encourage the horse to move more while grazing can be a useful method.

Where the paddocks cannot be changed grazing may need restricted, meaning increased stabling or turning out onto an alternative area. Having the option of a non-grass area such as a yard or alternative surface can allow the horse to be out and moving without the unlimited access to grass.

If none of these options suit the yard set up, a grazing muzzle may be the only alternative to reduce grass intake. It is vital that muzzles fit well to avoid rubbing.

ALTERING SUPPLEMENTARY FEED - many horses can be managed well without any hard feed with only balancer to provide them with any vitamins or minerals missing from their forage. Consider the age, health and workload of your horse and whether they need all the hard feed they are getting.

Weighing out forage can be hugely helpful. Horses require a minimum of 1.5% of their bodyweight in feed (including grass/forage) even on the strictest diets, but we need to be careful not to over-feed. Once the forage has been weighed out, soaking can be utilised to reduce the sugar content.

Changing the way we feed will make smaller rations last. Double netting, hanging nets in different places to encourage foraging or using a hayball can help keep them entertained for longer and will prevent them from standing for long periods without food if they are on a restricted diet. Horses that are on a diet and have restricted grazing are much more likely to suffer from boredom and this will help to keep them busy. This tactic works to keep non-dieting horses entertained too!

USING THE NATURAL METABOLISM OF THE HORSE - a healthy horse in good body condition that is allowed to gradually acclimatise to the drop in temperature can manage very well without a rug, requiring a thin waterproof rug only when weather is wet. This encourages natural loss of fat during the winter meaning there is some leeway in the spring when the grass comes through. Giving your horse a bib or trace clip also utilises this natural metabolism as it means the horse has to burn more calories to keep warm as some of its insulation has been removed.

INCREASING EXERCISE - this very much depends on the soundness and the fitness of the horse. Some cannot be exercised due to lameness and this must not be ignored in order to reduce their weight. In these cases the other three areas must be relied upon more heavily.

Variety in exercise makes it more fun for you and for the horse. Planning fun rides, trips to the beach with a friend and setting goals for you and horse, as well as utilising a variety of schooling, lunging or long reining and hacking can make helping your horse get to a healthy weight an enjoyable experience.

Non-ridden sound horses or children's ponies can have their exercise increased using in hand walking, leading from another horse, or using a horse walker. Although trotting and cantering burn more calories, increasing exercise in any way is beneficial.

If time is a factor, getting a sharer or a friend to help exercise the horse a couple of times a week can be a big help.

The biggest hurdle in getting weight off an overweight horse is often that owners feel they aren't making progress. Taking monthly photos can really help to see the changes you are making that you might not notice when you look at your horse every day. Weigh tapes, although not being particularly accurate for exact weights can be useful in showing progress. Regular weighing of your horse is the best way to track progress and help in setting targets.



****WEIGHT CLINICS****

The NEW equine weighbridge is now set up at Newbiggin and is already being put to good use! We will be holding monthly weight clinics from the start of September, the first of these running on Wednesday the 18th from 1:30pm.

Although the format may change the idea is that horses, ponies or donkeys will be weighed on arrival and will then have a check over and condition score with the attending vet. This will be followed by a discussion and then with the vets help a management plan can then be created and extra diagnostics/ treatment can be performed if required.

Anyone can attend; these will be useful for overweight and underweight horses or can be used to see if your horse is in the recommended condition. The clinics will be non-judgemental so please do not feel that we will 'tell you off' and that you can not attend!

Horses will be charged £7.50 at the clinics to be weighed and if any further tests or treatment are required these will be charged at their usual rate.

If you would be interested in attending please call 017684 83789 and speak to the equine team.



The weigh bridge will also be available throughout the week and at some times over the weekends if you would like to come along and weigh your horse. The charge will be £10 per horse. Please give us a call to arrange a time so that we can make sure the yard isn't too busy and that a support member of staff is available to help you. Vets will not be routinely scheduled to be at these appointments.

AUTUMN AND WINTER WORMING

Selina Squarotti - BVMS MRCVS



The most important equine parasites are small red worms (*small strongyles or cyathostomins*), large redworms (*large strongyles*), large roundworms (*ascarids*), tapeworm and bots. Horses might be asymptomatic to worm infections, or can show gastrointestinal signs, such as weight loss, diarrhoea, colic and poor appetite. Foals may additionally show respiratory signs, such as a snotty nose and cough.

Small red worms are the most common worms found in horses. We advise that all horses, ponies and donkeys should receive an effective treatment against redworms in Winter; November/December time, to prevent small redworm larvae encysting (hibernating within the walls of the guts).

Especially throughout Autumn and Winter small red worm larvae usually encyst within the horse's gut wall, suddenly emerging en mass in spring, damaging the guts and causing colic and diarrhoea. This condition is referred to as *larval cyathostomiasis*, and has a mortality rate as high as 50%.

Although Faecal worm egg count (FWEC) are an excellent tool to monitor worm burden from Spring to later Autumn, it will not detect encysted red worms, because the encysted larvae do not produce eggs. Horses can therefore harbour millions of encysted larvae, but show a negative or low FWEC.

Not every wormer treats every parasite, it is therefore important to select the correct one for the species targeted. We can help you to select the appropriate product for treatment.

It is also essential to have an accurate weight for the horse, either by weigh tape or scale, to dose the horse accurately. This is important, because under-dosing can increase the risk of resistance. The weight of the horse should be accurately measured, then 10% should be added, for example, a 500kg horse should receive 550kg dose of wormer.

Resistance to worming is an increasingly alarming issue. There are various ways to reduce the risk of resistance:

- Only worm animals needing treatment (after a FWEC) or if providing a Winter worming treatment.
- Leave horses on the same pasture for 2 weeks after being wormed
- Test if the wormer has worked with a FWEC 14-17 days after treatment
- Make sure horses are correctly dosed for their bodyweight



It is therefore essential to test horses with a FWEC Spring - Autumn months, to check the worm load and avoid the unnecessary use of wormers, which would increase the risk of resistance, making the products available less effective.

Despite all these precautions, Winter worming against encysted red worms is strongly recommended in the Winter months, since they are not detected on FWEC and have the potential to cause severe health problems.

****During September to we running a faecal worm egg count promotion, positive samples will receive a FREE worming treatment. For further information please speak to the equine team.****

****HORSE HEALTH PLAN****

Our new Horse Health Plan launched in March.

Like the Pet Health Club those wishing to join pay a monthly direct debit to spread the cost of annual preventative healthcare. Further details are listed in the flyer alongside.

Please speak to one of the Equine Team if you would like to discuss the Horse Health Plan further or if you would like to sign up.



Paragon
Horse Health Plan

Have you heard about Paragon's healthcare plan for horses and ponies?

Only £15 a month

Benefits include:

- Annual vaccination for equine influenza and tetanus
- 10% off first & second vaccines when starting a primary course
- 10% off additional 6 monthly influenza vaccines required for competing
- Annual dental examination and routine rasping, including sedation if required
- Annual health check, including examination of eyes, heart, lungs, legs and a hot up
- Worming program, including 3 faecal worm egg counts and winter wormer
- £ free with pre year for routine health care
- 10% off fluoro medications
- 10% off Paragon equine supplements

Spread the cost of routine healthcare with a direct debit

Speak to us today to join our Horse Health Plan:
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