

Welcome to the second edition of Loch Leven Equine Practice's newsletter, which hopefully you will find bigger and better than the last one! Whilst it is quite depressing to start thinking about Autumn and the darker evenings there is plenty to think about as the end of the year draws nearer. Worming, feeding requirements for our horses and ponies, hopefully slightly softer ground and therefore less injury problems, mud fever..... *The list is endless!*



From L to R Nicola Mason MRCVS, Hugh Somerville MRCVS, Liz Somerville, Pattie Fraser

Tapeworms

Autumn is approaching fast and it is that time of year when we need to worm our horses for Tapeworm (*Anoplocephala* spp). These are normally found in the small and large intestine of the horse and can grow up to 20cm long although the average size is about 4-5cm. Exposure to tapeworm is normally greater following periods of prolonged grazing i.e summer turnout. Because the life cycle of these worms is about six months we recommend worming for them in the Autumn after summer grazing and then again in the spring (approx 6 months). There are two types of drugs which will kill tapeworms – praziquantel (Equitape & Equest Promax) and pyrantel (Strongid P & Pyratape P) which must be given as a double dose. At the same time you must keep going with the other wormers which kill different types of worms, for example Equest which is given every 13 weeks.

Since writing this newsletter we have had a visit from our Forte Dodge representative who make Equest and Equitape wormers. Forte Dodge have just launched a new combination wormer which means that your horse now only needs four wormers a year instead of six. Equest and Equitape have been combined to make "Equest Pramox". The idea is that in winter and summer you still worm with Equest but in the autumn and spring you give a single Equest Pramox instead of both Equest and Equitape. Together Equest and Equest Pramox aim to offer a simple, comprehensive and effective year-round worm control programme. We have enclosed an information leaflet for you to read however we do have more detailed brochures at the practice if you want some more information.

Office Hours

Monday – Friday 8.30am-5.30pm
Sat & Sun – Closed

For any emergencies after office hours please phone the office number and listen to the recorded message or phone the emergency phone on 07789 684245 to speak directly to the vet on duty. For any admin queries after hours please leave a message and Liz or Pattie will call you back as soon as the office is open.

Useful web Links

www.laminitis.org.uk

www.grasssickness.org.uk

www.beva.org.uk –

British Equine Veterinary Association

www.aht.org.uk –

Animal Health Trust

www.ilph.org.uk



Pattie Fraser

By now some of you may have by now spoken to Pattie Fraser on the phone, but for those of you who haven't, Pattie is coming into the office on a Thursday and Friday to help Liz with all of the administration work. She has spent the last twelve years helping Hilarie Russell with all of her horses and ponies at Watergate Farm, Cleish. As Hilarie has moved away up north Pattie has agreed to help us out.



Tendon Injuries

Hugh Somerville MRCVS

Hopefully this summer's competing will have been successful and without any mishaps. Unfortunately though, the combination of hard work and hard ground can often result in lameness. This may be due to the concussive forces causing joint problems, or the hard unyielding ground putting extra strain on tendons and ligaments.

A tendon extends from an upper leg muscle down to a bony attachment on the lower leg. A ligament runs between two bones. They comprise of a similar arrangement of tightly packed elastic fibres which can store and release energy to act as a suspension system as well as causing joints to flex and move. Tendon tissue can stretch under load by up to 10%, but there is only so much force it can take before the fibres will snap. There is also a limit to the life of these fibres (the number of loading cycles). Therefore the majority of tendon injuries are a combination of wear and tear resulting in gradual weakening of the tendon, followed by the sudden injury where the extreme swelling and lameness are seen.

Tendon injuries vary from a mild strain to a severe core lesion. In a mild strain the tendon fibres are swollen in size. This change is usually reversible, but if not treated appropriately and rested it usually progresses to a more serious injury. A core lesion is the most common tendon injury in event horses and race horses. During fast work the central part of the tendon heats up more than the outer portion, as well as taking more of the strain. Eventually it can not cope with the forces put on it, and so the small fibres in the centre of the tendon snap.

The mainstay in diagnosis for tendon injuries is an ultrasound scanner.

It is important to use a much higher quality scanner for leg scanning than is used in reproductive scanning. These digital scanners can clearly show the difference between an early low grade tendon strain, and the more serious core lesions.

It is also possible to differentiate new injuries from older injuries depending on the amount of scar tissue within the tendon. This is also useful in monitoring the quality of healing during the healing process. Accurate measurements of tendon size also help with both the diagnosis and with monitoring the treatment program.

There are many different treatment options for tendon and ligament injuries. Many of these have come and gone from fashion over the years. All of these options have been based on improving the quality of scar tissue healing that fills in these central core lesions. The problem with scar tissue is that it is inelastic, with adhesions within it. This makes it much more prone to re-injury when work levels increase again. These treatment options include surgery (eg tendon splitting, solid implants, firing), medications (eg Bapten, Adequan, A-Cell, blisters). However no treatment will ever replace time (12 – 18 mths) and a controlled exercise program.

An exciting new treatment is now available for treating the more serious core lesion injuries. Instead of trying to improve the poor quality scar tissue, Stem Cell Therapy (SCT) actively grows new tendon tissue. Bone marrow cells are taken from the inside of the horse's sternum. A specialist laboratory then purifies this sample and multiplies a population of stem cells which can then grow into tendon when injected back into the centre of the injured tendon. This can all be done under a routine standing sedation and local anaesthetic. The new tendon tissue then has to be strengthened with an exercise program resulting in a much better outlook for future athletic exercise. This is particularly relevant for competition horses where the injury may well have been career limiting.

A recent study in racehorses showed an improvement in the success rate from a 30% to 75% return to racing following this treatment.

Our aim is to identify tendon injuries at an early stage, to intervene before the more serious core lesions have formed, but then to treat these serious injuries promptly and more successfully for a return to competition.



Ultrasound Scanner

Vets & Physiotherapists working together

We see lots of horses with sore backs and will quite often recommend qualified physiotherapists at our visit if we feel that the problem can be remedied by physiotherapy and are very happy to liaise with physiotherapists at an owner's request. However, there are a lot of "back people", osteopaths and chiropractors out there, and without recognised qualifications we as a practice would not recommend using them. Qualified physiotherapists spend years training as a human physiotherapist first and then specialise in horses. The role of a physiotherapist is to provide physical manipulation and exercise for a specific injury to promote return to normal function. Alongside this manipulation and massage, there are other modalities which physiotherapists use such as therapeutic ultrasound and laser therapy, as ways to speed up the healing process and dampen down inflammatory responses.



Horse Health Plans Liz Somerville

be able to notice changes as and when they occur.

The health plan will include information about your horse's exercise and feeding regime, vaccination and worming programme (including a faecal worm egg count), foot and dental care and any previous and existing health problems. At the start of the visit Hugh or Nicola will conduct a full clinical examination looking at your horse's heart, lungs, eyes, teeth, body condition, skin, legs and movement. They can then discuss all of the points above with you and decide what action if any needs to be taken.

We have produced a form which we will send out to you before your visit so that you can complete as much information about your horse or pony's care before Hugh or Nicola arrive. Then they can go through this with you and fill in any gaps and complete the medical sections. Once we have scanned this onto your records for future reference we will post the form out for you to keep.

We are also going to offer as an addition to the Health Plan the

option to run a blood sample for a basic health profile. This will include haematology which looks at red and white blood cell counts which might indicate whether your horse had a virus or was just feeling under the weather, muscle enzymes indicating whether there was any muscle damage commonly called tying up, and liver enzymes which are especially important in our older horses and ponies. If these were run every year it means we can build up a good picture of what is normal for your horse or pony so that if they do develop a problem we have a marker to compare the results with. You will receive a follow up call with the results of the blood test and a printed copy of the results for your record.

The Cost of the Annual Health Plan is £58.00

(includes faecal worm egg count) plus your visit fee.

The cost of the Blood sample including all lab fees is £42.00 + VAT

If you have your horse vaccinated and/or a tooth rasp at the same time you will receive 10% discount on both of these.

We have decided to offer a new scheme over the winter months which will run from October through to February. The British Equine Veterinary Association is promoting the use of Annual Horse Health Plans because they feel that this is a great opportunity to promote preventative health care.

If we are able to catch a condition early on and put in place measures to limit any further developments not only does your horse benefit but you could be saved a costly vet bill at a later stage. We hope it will give you the opportunity to discuss any health worries and give you reassurance over any safety concerns, for example eye or heart conditions affecting the older horse who is still in ridden work. It also means that we will have yearly information about your horse and will

Teeth Time

With Autumn and Winter approaching, now is a good time to be thinking about your horse's teeth. Routine dental care is important not only for a comfortable riding mouth, but also for an efficient grinding unit so that all the food can be chewed properly to provide the horse with the energy, protein and nutrients that are within the diet. Elderly horses and ponies often start losing teeth and are unable to chew properly (quidding) and so struggle in winter when more of their diet is hay or haylage.



Old Horses Teeth

undertaken by an Equine Dental Technicians (EDTs) who is registered with the British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) or an experienced Veterinary Surgeon. It is essential to perform a thorough examination, using a metal gag that opens the horse's mouth. Both Nicola and Hugh have undergone further training

in Equine Dentistry, and can offer routine dental care as well as the more specialised corrective dentistry with electric motorised equipment. We can also safely sedate horses who either find the rasping uncomfortable due to ulcers, or those who can be un-cooperative or nervous.



Dental Equipment



Ragwort Nicola Mason MRCVS

Even after the plant dies it remains poisonous, so can be a particular problem if it contaminates a batch of hay or haylage. Horses and ponies will not usually eat the fresh plant whilst it is still alive, but will do so once it has died and wilted. Therefore if you have even the smallest amount of ragwort definitely don't cut or top your field if you are grazing horses or ponies on it.

Ragwort is a commonly encountered weed in the UK. It is potentially deadly to animals especially horses and cattle. The most commonly encountered form is known as Common Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), but Marsh Ragwort and Oxford Ragwort are also found in certain areas of the British Isles. Common Ragwort has a woody stem with dark green leaves and grows to 30-100cm in height. Its flowers are bright yellow in colour and appear in April/May. It generally dies after it has set seed but can persist and flower for many years. However it is prolific at producing seeds and this is what allows its persistence on grazing land.

All parts of the ragwort plant are poisonous, including the seeds.

Due to the toxicity of this plant it is classified as an injurious weed and is covered legally by the Injurious Weeds Act 1959. This act states that a landowner can be served an enforcement notice requiring the owner to take action to prevent the spread of injurious weeds if found on their land. However there is now a Ragwort Control Act which gives added protection to horses and other animals. This act was sponsored by the British Horse Society and originated as a Private Members Bill, coming into force in February 2004. It allowed the Secretary of State to put together a code of practice to prevent the spread of ragwort. The code of practice gives advice on identification of the plant, risk assessment of grazing, control methods, environmental considerations and health and safety issues. This act does not seek to eradicate ragwort

but control it in areas where it may cause harm to grazing animals. The code of practice can be viewed on the DEFRA website.

There is a Nationwide Ragwort Awareness Week (see diary dates) to try and raise awareness about this horrible plant. The ILPH website (see useful web links) also have an information sheet about Ragwort that you can download and keep. Despite lots of publicity from vets it is still commonly thought that just because your horse doesn't show signs of ragwort poisoning straight away "it doesn't happen to us". If you are in any doubt about whether your horse or pony might have eaten some ragwort please, please give us a call.



Accounts

A horrible subject I know but please can we remind everyone that our credit terms are 14 days on receipt of invoice. A surcharge of 2.5% will be added to any account over 30 days and for every month thereafter.

Diary Dates

British Equine Veterinary Association Congress – 13th – 16th September 2006

Ragwort Awareness Week – 18th - 22nd September 2006



Horse of the Year Show – 4th – 8th October 2006

The Equine Event (Your Horse Live) – 5th November

Loch Leven
EQUINE PRACTICE

01577 850222 07789 684245 (Out of Hours)

Loch Leven Equine Practice Boreland Farm Cottage Cleish, Kinross
Kinross-shire KY13 0LN
Email: vet@lochlevenequine.co.uk
www.lochlevenequine.co.uk