



CONTACT

Western Counties Equine Hospital

NEWS...

The team at Western Counties have had a busy spring and early summer period. The Hospital has received re-accreditation from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. The RCVS inspectors visit every 5 years to check all aspects of the Hospital working and general systems within the business. It is a great achievement for the team to be awarded Equine Hospital status again, continuing our commitment to the highest standards of care.

After a number of years in the practice Stuart Altoft is heading off to pursue his career elsewhere and we wish him well. We welcome Sinead Gleeson to cover the Somerset area. Sinead comes from southern Ireland and has been working in an equine practice in Warwickshire prior to her appointment at Western Counties. She has covered many aspects of equine practice and has a particular interest in the racing industry and competition horses. Claire Bailey joined the team in March 2014. Her home is in Hampshire but she trained in Sydney, Australia and has recently been working at an equine hospital in Berkshire. Her role is to assist Simon Joyner with the North Devon area of the practice.

If you come to visit the Hospital or one of the vet team come to visit your stables, you may notice that during the summer we have a number of visiting students who come from many different vet schools to see practice with us for two week periods. We also have an equine nurse student (Olivia Molyneux) who will be with us for a year on placement from Hartpury College.

CLIENT EVENING 8TH MAY 2014

The first client evening of the year was held here in the Hospital on Thursday 8 May. Topics covered included teeth, eyes and sarcoids with Simon, Chris and Alison covering each topic three times!

There were some anatomical specimens used. The horse heads used in the dentistry lecture were particularly interesting and caused a good deal of discussion!

We had a capacity number of clients (75) who all contributed to the raffle which raised £117.00 for the Devon Air Ambulance. Food was provided by the local Strand Stores in the village which was very well received by everyone.

We are planning to hold a second evening on Thursday 25 September 2014 so please put this date in your diary. We will publish the topics to be covered a little nearer the time.

The feedback sheets were most helpful and provided us with lots of useful information for future topics.

BURSARIES FOR 2014

We are awarding our annual training bursaries for this year at our client evening on Thursday 25 September 2014. The Bursaries are open to Western Counties clients (young and old!) and are to the value of £500 each, which can be spent with the trainer of your choice during 2014/15.



The two categories are Pony Club and Riding Club members

To apply please send a summary of your own and/or your horses achievements and the reasons for wishing to have further training, plus a supporting letter from the Chairman of your Riding Club or District Commissioner of your Pony Club, either by post or email to: Clare Crocker (Practice Manager) Western Counties Equine Hospital, Culmstock, Cullompton, Devon EX15 3LA
Email: clare.crocker@equinehospital.co.uk

The choice of training can be chosen by the applicant – the only stipulation being that Invoices for the training must be forwarded to Western Counties for direct payment to the trainer/training course. We would like our winners to write a three monthly diary report on how they are progressing throughout the year which we can then publish in our newsletter and on the website.

The closing date for entries is 8 September 2014 and the entrants will be assessed by an independent expert in each category. Short listed entrants will be invited to the Client Evening on Thursday 25 September when the winners will be announced.



A LITTLE BIT ITCHY?

Sweet itch is the most common insect-mediate problem in the UK. It is caused by a hypersensitivity reaction to culicoides midge salivary antigens. In addition many other antigens may be involved alongside the midge antigen. The incidence of sweet itch peaks from March to October however mild frost-free winters have allowed the midge breeding season to start early therefore clinical signs of sweet itch also appear earlier in the year, however not all horses that are bitten by midges develop sweet itch and a genetic predisposition is suspected.



Clinical Signs

Itchiness and/or raised itchy rash with secondary self-inflicted hair loss and skin lesions. Typically distribution around the upper neck, back and tail base (dock), although generalised itchiness may occur. In severe cases the entire mane and forelock may be rubbed out and the skin over the ears, neck, withers and tail becomes thickened, dry, rough and hairless. Itchiness is usually worse in the early evenings and early mornings as this is when there is major midge activity and affected horses and ponies may spend hours rubbing against trees, fences, doors or anything else available.

Management of sweet itch

Fundamentally the best means of managing allergies is to avoid exposure to the causal agent. Some precautions to reduce your horses exposure to midges while grazing include grazing in pasture way from water and woodland as midges breed in wet soil, moist decaying vegetation and stillwater sources, and they usually shelter among vegetation especially in woodland areas. The use of electric fencing at the pasture boundaries will prevent your horse from rubbing on gates etc.

Adaptions to your horses stabling such as placing your horse in a stable away from water with minimal areas where your horse can rub, alterations to your stable for example protective netting with ultra-fine pore sizes of less than 0.9mm² will reduce the amount of midges to pass into the stable, also a high speed fan will deter midges in flight. Adapting turnout patterns such as by stabling your horse at dawn and dusk as midges are more active at these times can also reduce your horses exposure to being bitten.

Hoods and rugs can be especially effective due to reducing the body area exposed to where midges feed which is the neck and the tail. These areas can be covered throughout the summer by using a special, lightweight sweet itch sheet and hood combination with belly band and tail cover. Rugs could also be treated with pyrethroid fabric sprays every other day to further protect your horse.

Fly repellent, insecticidal sprays or creams should be used not only on your horses mane, tail, withers and head but also along the midline and neck, especially during exercise. Insect repellent tags such as those used for cattle can also be attached to the horse's head collar, tack or rugs although this is probably less effective than treating the horse or its rug with a topical or fabric treatment. Colloidal oatmeal shampoos such as Coatex have anti-pruritic and moisturising properties can be used to bath your horses in to relieve their itchiness once per week from spring to autumn.

Omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids are thought to exert an anti-inflammatory effects, these fatty acids are found in high concentrations in flaxseed oil which is effective in reducing the response to intradermal culicoides allergen, although feeding large amounts of flaxseed oil may be contraindicated in obese horses.

All these management factors should help your horse to be more comfortable and less itchy throughout the summer. If you have any further questions regarding sweet itch don't hesitate to contact us at the hospital on 01884 841100.

WORMING ADVICE

Good pasture management

Good pasture management can reduce your horse's worm burden, this can be done by:

- The removal of faeces daily from the pasture the horse is grazing will break the lifecycle of most internal parasites.
- Horses can be rotated between paddocks so the land has time to rest, the land could also be chain harrowed which will cause the eggs in the faeces to desiccate which renders them sterile. In damper seasons etc the eggs may survive therefore the faeces should be removed prior to harrowing.
- Mixed species grazing such as grazing horses with cattle or sheep has been shown to reduce the environmental egg burden as they will graze the areas of forage around the equine faeces, thus ingesting parasitic eggs and larvae. These eggs and larvae cannot complete their life cycle and therefore die as they are species specific.

Faecal Worm Egg Counts

Performing regular faecal worm egg counts (FWECs) is fundamental in encouraging strategic worming programmes thus reducing resistance to anthelmintic treatments in horses. FWECs count the number of roundworm eggs in a faecal sample which represents the round worm burden of the horse. Tapeworm eggs do not show up on a standard test so require a blood ELISA test to detect antibody levels.

The initial cost of a FWEC may exceed the anthelmintic treatment itself, although a recent cost comparison analysis of target treatment protocols in horses identified that anthelmintic use was reduced by 82% which on average could lead to a saving of £294/yard per year when a strategic worming programme is followed.

The results of FWECs are most useful when all horses in the population are tested together therefore whole yards should be tested at the same time as only a relatively small number of horses are responsible for shedding the majority of nematode eggs into the environment. Approximately 80% of strongyles eggs are shed by around 20% of the total population.

Faecal worm egg count collection kits

At the hospital we have FREE faecal worm egg count kits to facilitate sample collection, they include all the equipment required to collect a sample for it to be sent or dropped back to the hospital. If you would like a FREE collection kit, please pick one up from the hospital or ring the practice on 01884 841100 and we will send you one.

OFFER

We have a current offer on until the end of September. If you bring a sample of faeces into the practice for a FWEC and if you buy a wormer from the practice you can get a FREE worm egg reduction test 14-17 days post wormer administration which will assess the efficiency of the wormer administered.

For any further information on worming or worm egg counts please don't hesitate to contact us on 01884 841100.