



Spring 2014 Newsletter

Latest news:

Firstly we hope you are all enjoying the recent Spring-like weather we are now enjoying. It certainly makes a change after the horrendously wet winter. We are also pleased to welcome Emily Pearson to the practice for the summer. Emily qualified 8 years ago and has since been working as an equine vet in Yorkshire and most recently at the Royal Veterinary College equine practice.

Secondly, on **Wednesday 14th May at The Wickham Institute (Binsted Village Hall)**, we will be hosting an evening focused on poor performance in the horse. Bridgefield physio and Merial, the makers of *Gastrogard*, will also be there to contribute to discussions on orthopaedic and medical causes of poor performance. The evening will be concluded with wine and cheese and an opportunity to chat in an informal setting. We look forward to seeing many of you there!

New Equine Grass Sickness Vaccine Trial

The Animal Health Trust (AHT) near Newmarket is commencing a vaccine trial this month, aiming to determine if this frequently fatal disease can be prevented.



Equine Grass Sickness (EGS) is a condition with approximately 85% mortality that affects the autonomic nervous system, most noticeably causing intestinal paralysis leading to the colic signs most often associated with the disease. The current theory is that EGS is a toxico-infection involving *Clostridium botulinum* type C, with several studies demonstrating a protective effect of natural immunity to *Clostridium botulinum* type C. In addition, other clostridial diseases, such as tetanus and botulism, are successfully prevented by vaccination, suggesting that it should theoretically be possible to prevent EGS by vaccination.

This ground-breaking, nationwide vaccine trial aims to determine the efficacy of *Clostridium botulinum* type C vaccination in preventing EGS by comparing EGS incidence between groups of horses receiving vaccination or a placebo. Demonstration of reduced disease incidence in vaccinated horses would provide a major breakthrough in the prevention of EGS. The Animal Health Trust are conducting this trial in collaboration with the Universities of Edinburgh, Liverpool and Surrey, and they are aiming to recruit 1100 horses for a two-year period from premises previously affected with a high incidence of EGS. In order to be eligible for the trial horses must be kept on a premises where there has been at least one case of EGS in the last two years, as well as having a valid equine passport and be in general good health.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like further information about EGS or the trial.

A happy update on a case of Atypical Myopathy

In our last newsletter we discussed the severe and increasingly emerging disease of Atypical Myopathy and that the likely cause has been identified as a toxin in the sycamore seed. The disease leads to destruction of skeletal, respiratory and cardiac muscles. Clinical signs include weakness, muscle tremors, lethargy, dark coloured urine and increased periods of lying down with a reluctance to stand. Even with intensive treatment many affected horses do not survive. Outbreaks of the disease most commonly occur in the Autumn. Sadly, last autumn, there was an increase in the number of horses developing the disease and indeed it struck within our practice too. However, we are delighted to report that one of the affected horses has now made an excellent recovery.

This horse is a 14 year old TB gelding who presented with a quieter than normal demeanour and had been grazing in a field with another horse who sadly succumbed to the disease. Blood tests taken at the time confirmed the diagnosis of Atypical myopathy and so the horse was immediately admitted to an equine hospital for intensive treatment. This included a high volume of intravenous fluids and glucose, pain relief and anti-inflammatories, as well as oral Vitamin E. After 12 days of treatment he returned home for a long and careful convalescence period.



Photos above left and right: The above two photos were taken just after he was discharged from hospital and demonstrate the marked muscle wastage and weight loss that is associated with the disease.

Photo on left: Here is a much more positive photo, taken three months later, showing him in much better condition and very much enjoying his convalescence in the sun!