



# KINGS BOUNTY

EQUINE PRACTICE

## Winter Newsletter 2016-2017

We hope that you all had a wonderful Christmas and New Year and are looking forward to what 2017 has in store!

### Latest News

#### We have moved!



With the practice increasing in size and now up to three vets, we decided we needed to find a bigger space!

We have been lucky enough to have been welcomed on to The West Tisted Manor Estate, where the office is now based (10 minutes south west of Alton).

Business as usual! SAME phone number; SAME postal address but don't forget to give us a call for directions if you would like to pop in to say hello, collect drugs etc.

#### Bobble Hat Competition

We promised that we would choose the best photo of the Kings Bounty Hat...and here is our choice!

Congratulations to The Addisons - we love this photo! Dennis has won himself a Kings Bounty goodie bag!

Thank you for all of the other great entries - there were some really lovely photos...and some really amusing ones as you can imagine!



#### Introducing Our New Veterinary Muscle Tonic!



We are pleased to announce our new 'Veterinary Muscle Tonic' which is a natural feeding supplement consisting of Rice Bran Oil. It is a cost effective way to promote muscle development and growth, physical wellbeing and improve horses overall appearance.

Feel free to ask any of the vets if you would like more information on this product.

**NB: If your horse is competing, please check with us before using.**

## WINTER HORSE HEALTH ISSUES: MUD FEVER

It's that time of year again when looking after your horse presents many challenges. The mud and cold weather can predispose horses to a number of conditions; one in particular is **MUD FEVER**.

Mud fever, also known as cracked heels or greasy heels, is a condition of the skin on the lower legs that typically occurs during wet weather in horses that are turned out. It is a *bacterial infection* caused by the bacteria *Dermatophilus congolensis*. The bacteria live within the mud, with some fields being more severely infected than normal. The bacteria are extremely durable in the environment and can persist in the scabs/crusts for years. The bacteria will not invade healthy skin, however, skin that is constantly exposed to wet conditions will gradually become chapped and sore, allowing the bacteria to enter the skin and set up a localised infection.



### **Which horses are most severely affected?**

Any horse can be affected by mud fever. It is certainly not a condition that is limited to those turned out in extreme muddy conditions. However, those with *fine limbs*, 'thin skinned' breeds such as Arabs and TBs, and those with *white fetlocks and pasterns* are generally most severely affected. Cobs with heavy feathers may suffer less due to the protection offered by the feathers.

### **How will I recognise if my horse has mud fever?**

Typically the horse presents with *scabs* on the pasterns that cause the hair to *clump together* (has the appearance of a paintbrush). When these scabs are removed, underlying skin will have a layer of *pus*. Occasionally there will be *swelling* of the whole lower limb and in severe cases the horse may show signs of *lameness*. It is important not to confuse mud fever with leg mites. Leg mites normally cause scabs higher up the leg, with irritation and stamping of the legs a common feature.

### **How should I treat mud fever?**

Early recognition and treatment is important to prevent the condition from progressing.

1. In the initial stages the lower limb should be **washed daily** with an **antibacterial shampoo** (Malaseb or Hibiscrub solution work best). The legs should be **dried off well**, ideally with paper towels which are disposed of afterwards - the scabs can remain infective for years in the environment so using the same towel to dry the legs daily will cause recurrence of infection.
2. The legs should be **clipped** (with sedation if the horse is fractious or painful) and the **scabs removed** once they are softened. This stage is vital as the bacteria live under the scabs, so removal will allow the bacteria to be exposed to the antibacterial creams and shampoos. Dispose of the scabs carefully; they carry the mud fever bacteria!
3. An antibacterial cream such as **Flamazine** (prescription only) can be applied once the scabs are removed. Other topical preparations are available. Management at this stage is important. Ideally the horse needs to be stabled in clean and dry environment. Continuing to turn the horse out when trying to manage mud fever almost always results in very slow improvement or sometimes deterioration.
4. In the event of lameness or swelling the horse should be examined by a veterinary surgeon as may require a course of oral/ injectable antibiotics.

### **How can I prevent mud fever?**

Once a horse has suffered from one bout of mud fever, it is usually prone to future bouts, therefore, as with many things, prevention is better than cure! Removing mud from the horse's legs is important, but take caution if hosing the legs as this creates a wet environment which allows the mud fever bacteria to flourish! Therefore, the best way to remove mud is to allow the legs to dry and then to brush the mud away with a dandy brush. Covering legs to prevent mud fever can work, but if the leg covers are not breathable then the warm, wet conditions will encourage bacterial growth. An oil based barrier cream such as Vaseline can be applied to legs before turn out. Placing rubber matting around water troughs and gateways can prevent severe muddy conditions from developing! Checking the horse's legs on a daily basis can allow you to intervene and instigate treatment of mud fever at the first sign.