

Winter Newsletter 2017

Wow, 2017 has certainly flown by! We still can't believe that the 1st November marked the first anniversary of Kings Bounty Equine Practice being at The Old Stables in West Tisted. Over the past few months, the practice has welcomed two new members, albeit of the four legged variety, to the Kings Bounty team with the addition of 'Jordan', Sara's little black Spanish rescue puppy and 'Tinkerbell', Becky's new little Welsh pony for her daughter Brooke!



Introducing our new Veterinary Muscle Supplement – Veterinary Myomass-E!

Containing a high concentration of amino acids derived mainly from pea protein and the antioxidant Vitamin E, this muscle supplement is an excellent aid in the development and maintenance of lean muscle mass in horses. Other benefits include improved overall appearance and physical well being, improved strength and maximum muscular development in young stock. The supplement can be used in a wide range of situations, whether for maintenance of normal muscle mass, during periods of pre-training or prior to sale, during rehabilitation or during intensive training or competition.



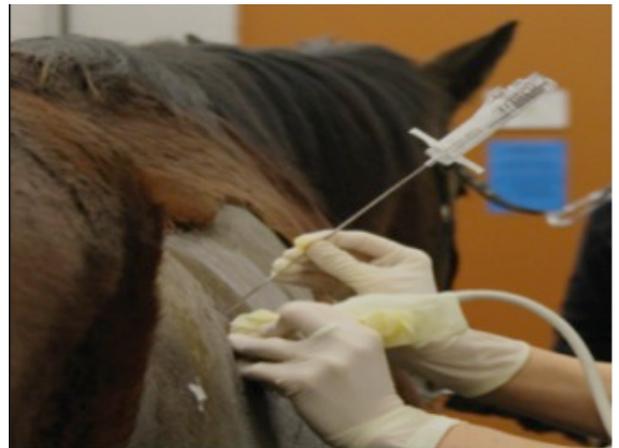
The supplement comes in a 2-month supply and does not test under competition rules. If you would like more information on this product or the pricing then please call the office on 01420 520164 or one of the vets directly.

Liver Disease in Horses

Over the past couple of months, the practice has seen a flurry of liver cases, therefore we thought we would give you a little bit more information about liver disease in the adult horse. Liver disease is often detected incidentally via routine blood samples. This is because the liver has a reserve capacity of around 80% meaning many clinical signs are not shown until a large amount of the liver is diseased. The most common signs of liver disease are: **jaundice (icterus)**, **behavioural changes** and **weight loss**. Other signs include **photosensitisation** (sun burn type lesions on pink skin), **respiratory difficulties** and occasionally **diarrhoea**.

If liver disease is suspected, the first thing the vet will do is take a blood sample to look for liver disease. Levels of liver enzymes and other indicators of liver function are analysed. Liver damage may be indicated if there are increased levels of these markers, however, the cause of liver disease cannot be determined by blood results alone.

Often the vet will suggest performing a liver biopsy if levels are sufficiently high. Liver biopsy samples are more useful in determining the cause of the damage and prognosis for the horse. Liver biopsies are relatively straightforward to perform and can be carried out on the yard under standing sedation and ultrasound guidance. The use of ultrasound also enables the vet to look at the architecture of the liver, however due to the large size of the horse, only the outer portion of the liver can be visualised.



Causes of liver disease include:

- **Pyrrrolizidine alkaloid poisoning** e.g. Ragwort poisoning. This is often a chronic disease process with clinical signs not being shown until months or even a year after ingestion. Treatment is often unsuccessful if there is marked fibrosis evident.
- **Hepatotoxins** e.g. plants, mycotoxins in feed, chemicals, some drugs administered
- **Acute and Chronic Hepatitis** (inflammatory process within the liver)
- **Cholangiohepatitis** (severe inflammation of the bile passages and adjacent liver)
- **Hyperlipaemia** e.g. fatty liver. This is more common in ponies and miniature ponies when a negative energy balance is reached e.g. they stop eating. Fat is then broken down in the body and stored in the liver.
- **Haemochromatosis** – due to increased iron stored in the liver
- **Cholelithiasis** – blockage of the bile duct.

Treatment of Liver Disease:

- Treatment of liver disease is often more successful in acute cases before excessive fibrosis (scarring) of the liver develops and when the liver is still able to regenerate.
- *Eliminating the cause* is paramount, although this is often difficult to determine. Changing feeds and moving pastures may be recommended. Eliminating the cause will unfortunately have little effect if irreparable liver damage has occurred.
- *Diet* should be altered to ensure the horse is fed with more frequent feedings with readily digestible carbohydrates and a lower level of high quality protein.
- The horse will often be placed on a *liver support supplement* containing ingredients like Milk Thistle and be supplemented with antioxidants e.g. Vitamin E.
- *Antibiotic therapy* is sometimes indicated, as is treatment with *corticosteroids* in cases of chronic active hepatitis.