KINGS BOUNTY
EQUINE PRACTICE

SUMMER

Newsletter 2023

Brutal Holywell Run

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!

The Brutal Run at Holywell was definitely BRUTAL! Both Liz and Amy managed to get through the mud, rivers and ponds. However, one of our vets was slightly more successful in her river crossings than the other (as the photographer has managed to capture perfectly!!). Thank you to our fellow runners who joined us on the day!

With the support of clients, friends and family, we have raised a total of £400 for Vetlife and cannot thank everyone enough for their help raising funds for such an important cause.

WHAT IS EQUINE HERPES VIRUS AND SHOULD MY HORSE BE VACCINATED?

Equine Herpes Virus (EHV) is a highly contagious disease that occurs in horses across the world. It is spread via direct contact between horses, aerosol droplets over short distances, bodily fluids from infected horses, shared equipment eg tack or feed bowls or via people on their hands or clothing. Of the nine strains of EHV, two are most common: EHV-1 and EHV-4.

Depending on the strain of EHV, horses may show different clinical signs and there are different forms of disease caused by EHV.

Some horses may only show very mild signs or potentially no clinical signs if they are silently carrying the virus.

Respiratory Disease:

- Both EHV-1 and EHV-4 can cause respiratory disease which may appear like Equine Influenza:
  - High temperature (>38.5 C)
  - Green/ yellow nasal discharge
  - Coughing
  - Inappetence
  - Lethargy and dullness
- Most horses will start to show symptoms 1-6 days after infection
- It can occur in any age horse, however younger horses are more susceptible

Neurological Disease:

- EHV-1 can cause serious damage to the nervous system which results in severe neurological symptoms:
  - Weakness
  - Ataxia (poor limb coordination)
  - Weakness may progress to recumbency and inability to stand
  - Inability to pass urine or manure
- Can occur in any age horse

Abortion:

- ·Both EHV-1 and EHV-4 can cause affected mares to abort their foals
- When a foal is aborted due to EHV, the body and any fluid is a source of infection to other horses

WHAT IS EQUINE HERPES VIRUS AND SHOULD MY HORSE BE VACCINATED?

Prognosis:
Horses with the respiratory disease tend to recover over the course of a few weeks, provided there are no complications.
Horses with the neurological form can take months to recover, and if signs are severe or the horse is unable to stand, euthanasia may be the only viable option for the horse's welfare.

Biosecurity:
Maintaining good biosecurity, hygiene and cleanliness on any yard is vital to helping reduce the risk of infectious disease. Speak to your vet if you would like further information on biosecurity and quarantine procedures for your yard.

If you suspect EHV or another infectious disease in your horse, isolate your horse immediately and contact your vet for advice.

Vaccination:
There is a vaccine available which can help to protect against the respiratory disease caused by EHV-1 and EHV-4 and also to reduce the risk of abortion in pregnant mares. The British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) currently recommend that the following groups of horses are vaccinated for EHV as part of their routine health care:
Young horses aged between 6 months and 5 years
Horses in contact with pregnant mares
Horses kept at yards with frequent movement of horses on/off the premises
Horses which frequently attend events where they are in close contact with other horses
Pregnant mares at 5, 7 and 9 months of gestation

The primary course for an EHV vaccine is two injections 4-6 weeks apart, followed by 6 monthly boosters.

If you would like any further information on EHV and whether or not your horse should be vaccinated, please contact the practice.

EXERCISE, TRAVEL AND COMPETING DURING THE WARMER MONTHS



When temperatures suddenly rise, horses will not be acclimatised to working in those conditions and preferably should not be exercised during the hottest part of the day.

Exercise

Try to exercise your horse early in the morning or later in the evening, when temperatures are lower than during the middle of the day.

Travelling

The same applies when travelling – trailers and lorries can become extremely hot, particularly if you get stuck in traffic. Unless you have air conditioning or a cooling fan in the horse area of your lorry, your horse can become overheated and dehydrated in a short period of time. During long journeys, horses should be checked and offered water regularly to prevent them overheating and becoming dehydrated.
Take plenty of fresh water from home when travelling or competing as some horses don't like water that tastes different.

Competing

When competing in hot conditions, allow a shorter warm-up period and be prepared for your horse to tire more quickly. Offer water after warming up, before competing and immediately after competing to reduce the risk of heat-related health issues. Horses that are working hard and sweating for prolonged periods will be more at risk from heat stress, dehydration, electrolyte imbalance and muscle damage. Find some shade to stand in, when you're between classes.

If you have any concerns about heat-related health issues in your horse or pony, contact your vet immediately for advice.

RECOGNISING EQUINE SUMMER ALLERGIES

During the summer months there is an increase in the number of horses suffering allergic reactions. Here are a few common examples your horse could experience.

Urticaria

What is urticaria?

Urticaria, also known as hives, is often the result of an allergic reaction, however there are several other causes of the skin lesions.

What causes urticaria?

Urticaria is a type of skin reaction that can be triggered by one of a number of different 'allergens.'

It could be a substance that has been eaten, breathed in or come into contact with the skin. For example, a wasp sting, nettle rash, or a drug reaction.

Although, food allergy is often blamed, urticaria is simply a skin response to any allergen experienced by the body.

What are the signs of urticaria?

- Bumps or swellings are seen on the horse, known as wheals. They are formed by the release of inflammatory mediators from mast cells which causes dilation of blood vessels and leakage of fluid into the nearby tissue
- The skin lumps usually come up very quickly: sometimes you can see them swelling up over just 5 to 10 minutes
- The lumps vary in size and the number of swellings varies. Occasionally, the whole body is covered, but it is most commonly seen on the neck and flanks
- Often an affected horse will be very itchy and could look as if it has colic, rolling repeatedly
- Some horses may appear dull or depressed

How is urticaria treated?

If your horse has urticaria, call your vet. In many cases your vet will administer a short acting corticosteroid that speeds up the resolution of the lumps. They will usually disappear after 24 hours.

Often the identity of the allergen triggering the reaction not immediately evident and many cases do not recur. However, if this does happen there are further investigative tests that can be performed, such as intradermal skin testing.

How is urticaria managed?

- General medical management for urticaria typically consists of administration of steroids (either into the vein or the muscle) and/or antihistamines
- For localised lesions, topical steroid spray may be sufficient
- Chronic cases will be managed for a longer time period, and allergy testing may be commenced once lesions have resolved

Sweet Itch

What is sweet itch?

Sweet itch, otherwise known as Insect Bite Hypersensitivity, is an allergic reaction to proteins in the saliva of the biting Culicoides midge. Although all horses are bitten by these flies, only some develop an allergy. This disease causes immense distress in severely affected animals and can be a major welfare concern.

What are the signs of sweet itch?

- Persistent itching
- Horse may become irritable and restless
- In extreme cases horses can lose weight

How is sweet itch treated?

Certain drugs can be useful to suppress itchiness when faced with the onset of signs of sweet itch, including steroids, oclacitinib and sometimes antihistamines.

However, often these drugs are only partially effective and rarely suitable for long-term control.

Some anti-itch shampoos are available and also some fatty acid supplements may have anti-inflammatory effects and improve skin health.

How is sweet itch managed?

The most effective way to manage any allergy is to avoid exposure to what you are allergic to:-

- Frequent application of fly repellents
- Use of fly rugs and hoods
- Stabling in the afternoon and evenings
- Ensure turnout is away from wooded areas, ponds and ditches
- Turning out onto a field which is NOT sheltered by trees, such as a windy hill top may be beneficial, as strong breezes deter midges
- If practicable, a fan installed inside the building to create wind speeds of over 5mph can help
- Put hay in an exposed area of the field and not along a sheltered hedge
- Immunotherapy involves various "vaccine-like" treatments that aim to alter the abnormal immune response to the proteins in the midges' saliva

Equine Asthma

What is equine asthma?

The condition is an inflammatory disease of the smaller airways within the lungs (airway branches and air sacs) caused by an allergic reaction, often to tiny dust particles and spores in the air.

What causes equine asthma?

The reaction in the airways results in an over production of mucus, and thickening of the lining of the small airways, causing them to become partially obstructed and highly congested. To compensate for this and in order to get enough oxygen into the lungs, the horse has to make an increased effort to breathe.

What are the signs of equine asthma?

- A chronic, frequent cough
- Nasal discharge
- An increased respiratory rate effort that will usually worsen when they are put under stress or during exercise
- Due to abdominal muscular development from the effort required for breathing, a 'heave line' can develop along the bottom edge of the ribs

How is equine asthma treated?

Many cases will respond to changes in management alone if caught in the early stages. This involves removing the possible causes of the allergy (whether this is dust, pollen or fungal spores).

How is equine asthma managed?

Successful management requires dedication on the part of horse owners. Depending on the clinical signs and severity of equine asthma, affected horses may be managed successfully, not only for pleasure riding but also for competition.

SUSTAINABILITY - MEDICATIONS

Antimicrobial/anthelmintic use

In recent years there has been a lot of press surrounding the sustainable use of deworming products and antibiotics. Our practice has policies surrounding the appropriate use of these medications in order to protect them from developing resistance.

Antibiotics

The World Health Organisation classifies certain antibiotics as critically important antibiotics for human use. When these antibiotics are used in animals, there is a higher risk to humans of the development of antibiotic resistance. Antimicrobial resistance is a global public health concern in both humans and animals. Our aim is to reduce the use of antibiotics that might contribute to the development of further resistance.

Inappropriate use of antibiotics can also increase resistance.

You should always ensure that if your horse is prescribed antibiotics that you follow the vet's guidance fully and never cut short or lower the amount prescribed. Doing so can mean that the antibiotic isn't present for long enough to kill all of the bacteria, or doesn't reach the correct concentration required, leading to resistance.

Handling antimicrobials inappropriately may also increase your own resistance to certain antibiotics, so always make sure that you take care not to expose yourself to low doses by accident and always wear gloves when handling them. Keeping horses healthy is key to reducing the need for antibiotic treatments.

Good stable and field management is one of the most important factors in reducing antibiotic use, as well as using preventative healthcare methods such as vaccination programmes and horse health plans.

Anthelmintics (dewormers)

Targeted worming is the best practice for reducing resistance to deworming products. By performing regular worm egg counts it ensures that only those horses that have worms are treated, and therefore the worms are less likely to become resistant to the products we have available. For more information, please visit: canterforhorses.org.uk

Reducing dewormer use also reduces the environmental contamination caused by droppings from horses treated with dewormers on the pasture. This has adverse effects on insect populations, including the dung beetle. Dung beetles play an important role in improving pasture by burrowing into the soil, allowing nutrients and rainwater to soak into the ground, thereby improving the grass and reducing soil erosion. They are also an important food source for birds and small mammals.