

November Newsletter



Autumn has definitely arrived in terms of rain, but it is still unseasonably mild. Please remember that horses were originally designed to survive without being clothed! Over rugging not only causes issues with skin disease and coat development, but the majority need to lose weight over the winter by keeping warm themselves.

Evening meeting – slight postponement!

Our speaker for the November meeting has unfortunately had to cancel, so we have pushed the date back to try and sort out some new topics. Bear with us, we will still try to speak about supplements and some of the pitfalls, but we will add in another topic to try and keep everyone interested. Watch Facebook and the website for more details as soon as we have them. Apologies!

Gastroscopy clinics

We have previously teamed up with pharmaceutical companies to run gastroscopy clinics, where they have subsidised the price of the procedure to encourage some clients to scope their horses. We often get asked to run clinics throughout the year, but the last two haven't had good uptake so we have had a re-think.

The plan from mid November is to offer 3 gastroscopy places every other Thursday morning at a subsidised rate, first come first served. This will also allow rescopes to be at the appropriate timings. There are issues with insurance, but if you are interested, please call the office to sign up for the next available slot.

Autumn worm treatments

It's approaching that time of year again when we advise the use of combination wormer Equest Pramox. Some of you may remember from the original set up of the worming scheme why we dose with these at this time of year, but it is always worth a reminder.

- Over the 'grazing season', worm egg counts are an excellent way of monitoring which horses are carrying the majority of the worm burden and keeping that under control.
- Once the cold weather hits though, the small red worm life-cycle changes to include a longer period of hibernation within the gut lining.
- These 'encysted' small redworms don't correlate with previous worm count levels and are not reliably detectable without repeated blood samples, so currently we dose with the only licensed treatment with no significant reported resistance – Equest Pramox.

We will be putting them up for collection over the next few weeks, so if you're passing or if you want them sending, please let us know.

It also includes a tapeworm dose which we recommend at least once a year. Some yards require more, but we rely on results of blood samples to assess the need to increase your horse's treatments – contact us at the surgery if you want to know more.

Atypical Myopathy – cases reported nationally

As many of you may have noticed from social media, there has been an increased occurrence of Atypical myopathy (also known as ‘sycamore poisoning’) over the start of autumn.

Atypical myopathy is a severe and potentially fatal muscle disorder of horses caused by eating fallen sycamore ‘helicopter’ seeds and, to a lesser extent sycamore leaves, or sycamore seedlings which grow in the spring. The seeds and seedlings contain a toxin known as *hypoglycin A* (HGA), which affects energy production in muscle cells.

Atypical Myopathy has a rapid onset and can affect individual horses or several horses in the same group - some horses appear more susceptible to the toxin than others. Cases often follow a sudden adverse change in weather conditions, such as a frost or heavy rain. The survival rate in affected horses is around 30-40% and is highly dependent on rapid diagnosis and treatment.

What are the signs of atypical myopathy?

- Muscle weakness, soreness or stiffness; horses may struggle to walk, stand or breathe
- Horses appear dull with low hanging heads
- Lethargy/fatigue
- Muscle trembling
- Colic like symptoms (e.g. shivering and sweating) except the horse still has an appetite
- Brown or dark red urine
- Some horses may develop heart & respiratory problems
- Loss of ability to stand.



Diagnosis is confirmed based on a clinical examination, grazing history and a variety of laboratory tests.

Severely affected horses often need to be admitted to a specialist equine hospital for round the clock intensive care including intravenous fluid therapy and anti-inflammatory medication. If horses survive the first few days of treatment, they usually recover completely, although this may take several months.

When a case is suspected or diagnosed, field companions should be removed from the pasture and have blood samples taken for muscle enzyme analysis.

What can you do to help?

- Avoid letting horses graze pastures with overhanging sycamore trees in the autumn.
- If horses have to remain in pasture where there are sycamore trees, fence off areas where seeds and leaves fall.
- Clear fallen sycamore leaves and seeds from grazing areas.
- In the spring, it is recommended that seedlings are mowed and the cuttings collected & removed
- Provide clean, easily accessible water.
- Provide access to adequate grass and feed supplementary forage during the autumn.
- Reduce stock density so that there is enough good grazing for every horse.

You can test for the presence of HGA in your own pasture – ask us for details.

The easiest way to get in touch is to email us at equine@bishoptonequinevets.co.uk or call the surgery on 01765 602396.