

Equine Newsletter – October 2010

LAMINITIS AND INSULIN RESISTANCE

We had a splendid turnout for Derek Knottenbelt's talk on this subject and we have experienced even more cases since!! This year has been particularly bad because of the excellent weather causing vigorous grass growth.

Whole text books have been written about this painful condition so only a few points of interest focussing on some small areas are noted here.

A horse can develop laminitis in one, two, three or all four feet. It can start in one and progress or just present as a horse that is lying down and has obvious pain in all four of its feet.

In overweight individuals it is caused by Insulin Resistance (like Type 2 Diabetes in humans). Very often owners do not see the weight gain in their horses as they are with them on a daily basis and get used to their size! Using a weigh tape regularly (and recording the weight) helps prevent obesity! It also makes sure the dose of wormers and drugs given is correct.

Keeping your pony or horse slim can be a challenge but regular exercise, turnout on restricted bare pastures at night (when the grass sugars are lower), feeding double soaked (see below) hay and not rugging all help.

The horse or pony with sudden onset laminitis must lose 10% of its weight (or achieve its ideal weight) within 2-3 months. It can do this by eating **only ad lib hay that is soaked for six hours then soaked again in fresh water for two hours.** It

need have no other food. This is the quickest, most humane and most practical way to enable the weight loss.

Two rules to help prevent laminitis:-

1. A horse **MUST LOSE 10% OF ITS BODY WEIGHT DURING THE WINTER.** It would do this naturally in the wild.
2. A horse must perform a reasonable level of work for **AT LEAST 15 minutes a day AT LEAST four times a week.**

Both of these help prevent Insulin Resistance.



Testing for insulin resistance

We strongly encourage you to test for insulin resistance in the next month or so. If your horse is found to have it then you can spend the winter months encouraging weight loss – the cold will help considerably!

The test involves one blood sample taken after a fast of at least six hours. You could remove feed overnight or turn out with a muzzle on for the six hours before we come. The laboratory fees are not expensive. Test any horse, pony or donkey that you think is overweight. If you think it is overweight then it probably is!!

If you don't want to test for Type 2 Diabetes then at least buy a weigh tape and monitor him regularly.

WORMING

There has been a lot of press recently about over worming, blanket worming with broad spectrum anthelmintics and 'intelligent worming'. At the

moment we still recommend a double dose of Pyratape P this month to deal with the tape worms and 5 days of Panacur Equine Guard in November to deal with small red worms – the cyathostomes. The experts still believe both of these parasites still cause significant trouble in the horse population.

Many of you are on livery yards with a constantly changing horse population. Horses come and go, arrive from unknown destinations with no worming history or at best a vague one and some even come with obvious infection. That is why we still use our worming programme and we know that it works well as we hardly ever see parasitic problems in our clients' horses.

The intelligent worming idea is a good one if everyone on a livery yard will do it and if all new comers are tested. Everyone must pick up droppings and the occasional horse owner may have to accept that (and not get offended if) their horse is the one that is consistently identified (using faecal egg counts) as infected. We are only too happy to be involved in organising a 'strategic worming program' on a whole yard if everyone is happy to pay for faecal egg counts, pick up droppings, and take and act on appropriate advice. If you would like us to help don't hesitate to give us a ring.

KISSING SPINES

This is a condition where the dorsal spinous processes of the vertebrae in the saddle region of the spine of the horse rub together or touch one another setting up irritation and pain. We have seen a few cases this year which is why we mention it here.

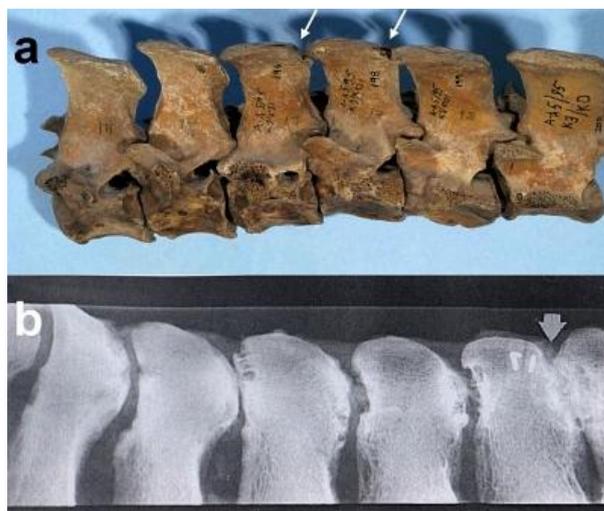
Horses can present with this condition at any age and there seem to be three categories of presentation:-

1. Young animals (3-4 yrs) that exhibit signs of back pain when broken in and first ridden.
2. Young competition animals (6-9yrs) that fail to train on as expected.
3. Older horses (10 plus) that have been competing satisfactorily and then begin to suffer back pain.

Some resist saddling or girthing or show vague signs of back discomfort and stiffness, poor

performance, poor jumping, bucking, reluctance to work and low grade hind limb lameness.

There is possibly a genetic predisposition to the condition but conformation, type of work (jumping and high quality dressage) and weight of saddle and rider have also been suggested as causing the problem.



Skeleton and X-ray showing "Kissing Spines"

Diagnosis can sometimes be difficult but involves a detailed examination of the horse at rest and at exercise and with a rider on if it is safe to do so, X-rays, bone scans and ultrasound. Instilling local anaesthetic into suspected painful areas can also be performed.

Treatment involves conservative management with anti-inflammatories, physiotherapy and rest but surgical treatment can be successful and can be done standing!

CLIENT INFORMATION MEETING.

On Wednesday November 10th at 7pm at The Millstones you are invited to listen to Dani Paizis and Lavinia Mitchell. Dani works locally as a McTimoney Physical Therapist. Lavinia is a nationally renowned saddle fitter who lives in Marlborough. They are both very enthusiastic about their subject and will welcome questions from the audience. Please let Gillian at the surgery know numbers beforehand or RSVP on our Facebook page.

