

## Preparing for Winter ...

### Itchy Legs ...

Those of you with Clydesdales or other heavy-feathered horses will know



Chorioptes Mite

become thicker. Fortunately, this is usually easy to treat with an injection, if it is caught early. This is the time of year to prevent or control leg mange and many

heavy-feathered horse owners have their horses treated annually to prevent it worsening over the winter. The mite is invisible to the naked eye and tends to cause sores a bit like mud fever, which don't go away – like the one in the picture here.



Leg Mange

about leg mange which is caused by a small mite called Chorioptes (see picture) which burrows into the skin. It causes a horrible itch with scabs and the condition gets worse as the winter progresses when the feathers

If you would like more information about getting your horse pro-actively treated or are concerned that your horse may have this condition already, then please give us a call.



**Keith & Rachel** are proud new parents of a healthy baby girl, delivered by caesarian section on the 8th September. She weighed 7lb 10oz and has been named **Eilidh Morag Chandler**. *Both mum and Eilidh are very well.*

### Equine Passports ...

The deadline is 28th February and because the passports are taking 3 months to come through you must ensure that you have applied for yours by the end of November at the latest. Passport legislation is based on European directives where equines are assumed to be potential food for humans. As bizarre as this may sound to you, horsemeat is eaten on the continent and passports are a way of keeping track of what medicines have been prescribed for equines as some of these cannot enter the human food chain. Another good reason for having passports is to provide a central source of information for us to be able to identify what vaccinations and medicines your horse has had. As a new owner, you will also be able to see where your horse has been in his life and if he has had other owners and treatments. And, if worst case scenario, your horse goes missing or is stolen, you will have an up to date record of what he looks like to show the authorities and other people. The passport shows your horse's unique markings, breed, age, gender and owner details. We will need to see your passports from the end of February before prescribing any medicines or giving vaccinations. If you already have an equine passport but are unsure if it will be valid under the new legislation, we are happy to advise you. We can supply new passports AND micro-chipping for just £29.50. We recommend micro-chipping for your peace of mind and coupled with your passport will give you the best chance of recovery if your horse goes missing. Make the most of our time with you - if you have friends who need passports, dentistry or vaccinations, why not get a group of horses and owners together and have everything done at the same time?

### Tapeworm Treatment

The best time to dose for tapeworm is the autumn. This is because the tapeworm eggs are carried by a small mite which lives on the pasture, known as an oribatid forage mite. These mites are generally killed off after the first frost and the best treatments to use are those which contain praziquantel: Equitape, Equimax or Eqvalan duo. Double dose pyrantel (Strongid-P or Pyratape) will also kill the tapeworms but is slightly less effective.



Gillian MacLennan on 'Rhiannon'

### Caption Competition



Thanks to everyone who entered our caption competition in our last issue. The winning caption was from Miss Emma Atkinson of Farr who said the best caption would be:

**'Hey mum, do you think these guys are ready for the show ring yet?'**  
**'Aye, but we'll have to tidy up you chappy with the cap first'**

If you have any questions on any of the topics in this second issue of our newsletter, then please get in touch.

K E S S O C K



E Q U I N E V E T S

# "OFF THE HOOF"

News & Information from the ONLY Dedicated Equine Practice in the Highlands & Moray

Issue 2 – Autumn 2004



Vets: Keith Chandler & Ian Ross

Welcome to the autumn edition of Kessock Equine Vets' Newsletter. Our aim is to provide horse-owners with the highest standards of equine veterinary & dental care in the Highlands and we hope that you find the newsletter helpful and interesting. We would welcome digital photos from you by e-mail for future inclusion in the newsletter or for posting on our web site at [www.kessock-equine-vets.co.uk](http://www.kessock-equine-vets.co.uk).

### Dentistry & Vaccinations ...

This year we have been lucky to avoid equine-strangles infection which is a particularly horrible bacterial infection that mainly affects younger horses. Did you know there is now a vaccination to prevent strangles infection? The vaccine is usually used in the face of an outbreak of the disease. Kessock Equine Vets now runs an e-mail service which would notify everyone on the list if there is a new outbreak of infectious disease and what to do to avoid it. If you would like to be on the list then e-mail Keith on [keithjchandler@btopenworld.com](mailto:keithjchandler@btopenworld.com). Whenever Kessock Equine Vets attends a horse for any vaccination we routinely examine the horse and check for any problems. It's a great opportunity for you to discuss any queries you may have about equine healthcare. If you suspect your horse needs his teeth checked or you need advice on vaccinations, then please give us a call or send us an e-mail. Both of these treatments can be included in visits for other problems or if there are a few owners, who need dental checks or dentistry treatment, why not book a group, session at one location? This can save you call-out costs and you might have the benefit of learning more about equine oral care as we'll be examining more than one set of teeth!

### Ragwort Poisoning and Liver Failure ...

The British Horse Society is organising a fantastic day of speakers at Dingwall Mart on Saturday 23rd October 2004 from 10.00am until around 4.00pm. The main speaker of the day is Dr Derek Knottenbelt from Liverpool Veterinary School who is internationally renowned for his lectures on ragwort poisoning. Derek is a very enthusiastic speaker and great to listen to. There will also be a lecture on laminitis from John Keen from Edinburgh. These two lecturers are supported by Dr Derek Cuddeford and Dr John Lowe who will be speaking about horse feeds and equine nutrition. The day is sponsored by Dodson & Horrell, Kessock Equine Vets, Hawco Volkswagen, NDS Animal Feeds, A & I Supplies, Elgin, EquiAds and Ragfork.



Ragwort – Young Shoots

This day is a must for anyone interested in horse care. Tickets are £15 each including lunch and afternoon refreshments. There will be trade stands to visit during the lunch break and Dodson & Horrell will be sponsoring a free raffle. Tickets can be obtained by ringing Lynn on 01463 861225, or from NDS in Nairn (they will take orders over the telephone on 01667 452730 and you can pay by switch or credit card).

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E Q U I N E V E T S

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## Autumn Diseases ...

### Outbreak of Coughing Continues ...

This season's outbreak of respiratory disease is worse than in previous years. Some horses have gone on to develop coughs which are taking up to two months to resolve and in a few cases the infection has been made worse by an underlying respiratory allergy known as heaves. Heaves (COPD) is caused by an allergy to the dust and moulds in hay and straw and very mild cases of heaves may just show reduced performance,



Endoscopy of horse's inflamed windpipe

however nearly all animals affected by heaves will have a reduced ability to fight off infection. This may mean that they need a combination of different therapies to overcome this infection.

With this in mind, if you suspect your equine

is suffering with respiratory disease, the sooner we can attend to the animal the better in order to tackle the problem as effectively and quickly as possible.

## Donkeys ...

It's amazing how many donkeys there are in the Highlands and it is reassuring to see how well they are looked after. Donkeys originated in arid areas of the world and because they are kept as pets, they can easily become obese in Scotland, endangering their health. It is very important to avoid rich lush grass especially in spring. Donkeys utilise food very efficiently and will thrive on (by horse standards) a very sparse diet. There are a few diseases which are common in donkeys but are less of a problem in horses, one of these is a condition called hyperlipaemia. If hyperlipaemia is not recognised and treated then it is fatal. One of the first signs of hyperlipaemia, is a donkey that is dull and not eating. Donkeys are



Donkey with foal

very stoic animals and can be quite sore or sick yet just look a bit under-the-weather. If in doubt, we're just a phone call away.

The donkey sanctuary is one of the UK's biggest charities and their web site is given below:

[www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk](http://www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk)  
[www.miniature-donkey-assoc.com](http://www.miniature-donkey-assoc.com)

## Improving Our Service ...

As part of our client service improvements at Kessock Equine Vets, we would like to ask for your assistance on appointment booking. Emergencies will always be dealt with at any time as part of our 24 hour service but for routine appointments or general enquiries we would appreciate being phoned between 9am and 1pm Monday to Friday. This is to enable us to schedule appointments well in advance wherever possible and to research

information if necessary. E-mailing us is another good way of booking in non-urgent appointments. From the end of October we are handing our paperwork 'reins' over to a new secretary who will answer the phone in the mornings and help us with administration. This will allow us to be more flexible with appointments especially as we realise that our clients often have to take time off work or need to re-arrange their daily

## Acorn Poisoning ...

Acorn poisoning is rare in horses and only occurs where horses are kept in very bare



Acorns

pastures bordered by oak trees. Generally horses will only eat acorns and oak leaves where there is nothing else to eat. The green acorns are thought to be more toxic than those that have fallen and when horses become poisoned by acorns they develop severe blood-stained diarrhoea with kidney failure. This is not a reason to start felling oak trees within nibbling distance of your pasture but it is a warning to those of you who have ponies on 'starvation' paddocks!

## End of Season Lameness ...

After a long season, many horses with subtle joint or tendon pain begin to show lameness. The common approach is to give them the winter off work and bring them back into work in the spring. Whilst this may suit your circumstances it isn't always the best approach. We see more lame horses in the spring than any other time of the year because owners have brought their horses back into work and realised that he/she is still lame! If your horse is not 100% at the moment, then now is the time to have the lameness investigated so that we have the best chance of correcting it before the new season. If there is demand from our clients then Keith may run a 'lameness masterclass' over the winter for equine owners, riders, trainers and other interested parties.

activities in order to be on-site when the vet attends. Hopefully all of these improvements will generate a better choice of appointment times and an even better service for our clients and their equines.

## Foot Injuries ...

Traumatic injuries and wounds are unfortunately very common in horses, but one of the more difficult to treat is that affecting the hooves. A successful outcome is dependant on close co-operation between your farrier and your vet.

The hoof itself has no blood supply and it only grows from the coronet at approximately 5mm per month; as a result injuries to the hoof take a long time to heal and grow out. On the other hand, the coronary band has a good blood and nerve supply so if the coronet is damaged too, then there is usually a lot of bleeding and these injuries can be quite painful. It would be very rare for a horse to bleed to death, so although there might be lots of very red blood (arterial), the horses are usually very calm and it is the owners that are in a flap!

If the injury has just happened then quickly hose the foot off and dress the foot, in which ever way you can. A firm pressure bandage using gauze or gamgee is the best way with duct tape covering the whole foot. Firm pressure is more



A damaged hoof

important than how the bandage looks and this will help stem the bleeding whilst you are waiting for the vet to attend. If the dressing that you have applied is good, then we may opt just to leave the bandage in place to avoid disturbing a blood clot, but in most cases we'd want to examine the foot very carefully. It's easy to numb the foot using a nerve block and a horse that is upset or won't stand still can be given a mild tranquiliser so the foot can be examined. Our main goal when dealing with an injury such as this is to ensure that neither coffin joint or navicular bursa is involved. If these are untouched then the next step is to assess the depth and extent of the injury and occasionally we like to x-ray the foot to check for damage to the pedal bone. Sometimes we put the foot in a cast to immobilise it completely and this encourages prompt healing. Although most injuries of this sort look terrible, they usually heal fine with a return to work and only a minimal defect in the hoof wall.

## 'Choke' ...

'Choke' or oesophageal obstruction is a really distressing sight. Some horses will gorge themselves on their food and if the feed is too dry it will become lodged during its passage to the stomach. Alternatively, if horses aren't chewing their food correctly because of poor or sharp teeth then they may also become choked.



A horse with a choke

Choke mainly occurs in the winter when our horses have access to more hard feed and fortunately most cases of choke are minor and many clear themselves within a few minutes. Horses generally become distressed with a hacking cough; saliva with food particles can be found coming from their nose. They often stand with their head and neck outstretched and occasionally you can even feel the obstruction in their

throat. The obstruction can occur anywhere from the throat to the stomach, which is a long way in a 17 hand horse! If your horse develops a choke, it is worth waiting for a few minutes before calling us because the majority of the small cases will clear themselves. If it fails to clear then generally, the treatments we use are relaxants and anti-inflammatory medicines.

We often pass a stomach tube and soften the obstruction with warm water and in severe cases we have to anaesthetise the horse in order to clear it completely. We usually like to administer some antibiotics too, just to prevent a type of lung infection called aspiration pneumonia which can sometimes occur after a severe choke.