

Urticaria ...

Urticaria is an allergic skin condition which is usually caused by something the horse is coming into contact with, or something that is being inhaled (breathed-in). When the urticaria happens as a one off, then it quickly responds to treatment. When the condition keeps coming back, it becomes more of a problem to deal with. Fortunately, there is a relatively



new treatment for this disease called hyposensitisation which involves a series of small injections to reduce the horse's reaction to the allergy. Hyposensitisation is also being used to treat sweet-itch with promising results and we are offering this service now.

Accounts ...

If you would like to pay by credit or debit card or if you have a query about your account then please call during our office hours, 9am - 1pm, Monday to Friday.

New Medicines ...

We now have 'Danilon' in-stock which is a new alternative to phenylbutazone ('bute': Pro-Dynam or Equipalazone), a popular anti-inflammatory pain killer. Although side-effects with bute are uncommon, Danilon is safer and slightly more effective. It comes in boxes of 60 and we are keen that horses who are on long-term bute therapy move onto Danilon because it is less likely to cause stomach ulcers and damage to the liver.

We have just started using the very latest treatment from Europe for the

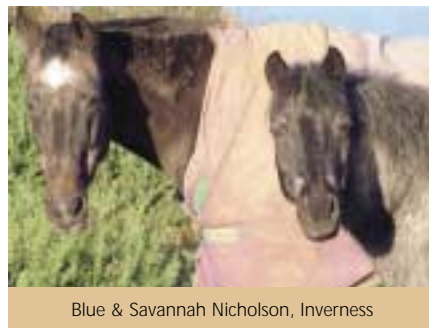
Diary dates for 2005

* BHS Highland south AGM on the 18th February at the Chieftan Hotel, Inverness

* Question time evening at Brockies Lodge Kiltarlity, Friday 4th March. Panel of experts including a farrier, trainer, chiropractor and ourselves as resident expert equine vet! This is a free evening with a buffet provided. This would be a great event for anyone who is new to horses as well as offering something for more experienced riders.

Further information or tickets for these events can be obtained by calling Lynne Goode, BHS Highland South Chairman on 01463 861225.

If you would like us to include any diary dates in the newsletter, please let us know. Our next issue will be the Spring newsletter which should be out in April or May.



Blue & Savannah Nicholson, Inverness

treatment of navicular syndrome. Tildren is the treatment of choice for navicular syndrome in some countries. We have to get a licence from the Scottish Executive to import and use the medicine and there are guidelines in place prior to use. Please feel free to contact us for further details.

The new vaccine for Strangles has been available for some months now and if we get a case of strangles in the area, we may recommend its use to animals on the same premises.

Competition ...

We ran a competition at the equine nutritional conference in Dingwall at the end of last year. The winners were: Innis Mitchell from Dornoch who won the festive hamper and Evelyn Pottie from Loch Flemington who won the waterproof jacket.

Web Site ...

Our web site is being updated and from the end of January you'll be able to access a lot more information from the site, including guidelines on the up and coming breeding season as well as more details about the services which we offer.

A Busy First Year...

We would like to wish all our clients a very happy new year and thank you for all your support in 2004. We now have over 650 equine-owner clients in the Highlands and in our first year of operation we had 2500 separate consultations! We look forward to keeping you posted on news from the practice, topical equine veterinary issues and events in our forthcoming newsletters.

Equine Recuperation ..

Loch Ness Riding is able to offer programmed rehabilitation for horses returning to work after injury or general fittening. The 60-foot diameter horse walker can be programmed to



Walker

different speeds and horses can comfortably walk and trot on the large circle with the best possible "geltrack" surface, a mixture of vaseline coated sand, elastic fibres and chipped rubber. Niagara Therapy massage machines are also available for use on horses. Both these services are available in consultation with us to provide the correct therapy for your horse. Loch Ness Riding can be contacted on **01463 751251**

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 3 - Winter 2005



Vets: Keith Chandler & Chris Mathews

Welcome to the winter 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

Worming Programmes ...

We provide a free service to horse owners in the Highlands, providing them with a laminated worming programme designed specifically to the owners' needs. Worming programmes can be quite complex because the requirements of horses in different situations are very different. For example, if you own a horse on a DIY livery yard with poor grazing your worming programme will be different from that required on a stud, with a mixture of pregnant mares and young-stock. There has been some recent research linking the worming of horses with grass sickness and we would urge all owners of horses grazing pasture which has had grass-sickness at some time in the past, to contact us so that we can provide them with a programme specifically designed to their needs. We are also beginning a worm count service. Dung sample analysis is the only way you can reliably tell whether your horse is passing worm eggs in the dung. All horses are infected with worms but only certain horses or ponies will actually pass worm eggs onto the pasture. By identifying the animals who are contributing to pasture contamination with worm eggs, you can adopt a more organic approach to horse worming. We can supply collection tubs for you and we only require a bit of dung as big as a golf ball. The best way to collect dung is by taking it from a stabled horse in the morning. The samples can then be dropped off with us or at Seaforth Saddlers in Inverness (within 7 days of collection) and we will then call or email you with the results; these results can be used to modify your worming programme or you may wish to move to a more organic approach to worming and reduce the number of wormers you use per year. We charge £8.50 per sample for this service, with discounts for 5 or more samples from the same premises. If you would like to ask more about this service, then give us a call!

Chris Matthews ...

Chris has joined the practice as our new equine vet. Having grown up in Ayrshire, Chris gained much experience working in local yards before beginning his veterinary career. He has since spent three successive stud seasons with a busy equine practice in Gloucestershire. Chris is slowly adapting to the nuances of Highland equine practice - in his first week at Kessock Equine Vets, snow stopped his lameness examination! He tells us this never happened in Florida. Chris enjoys all aspects of horse work and has a particular interest in lameness and stud medicine.



Winter Gallop

K E S S O C K



E Q U I N E V E T S

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(24 Hours)

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Equine Colic ...

One weekend in December we saw eight horses with colic, so we thought it would be useful to outline briefly some useful points! It can be a distressing experience when your horse develops colic- many owners will know or have heard of people who have lost horses with colic, and are understandably worried. But did you know that the vast majority of colic cases that we see at Kessock Equine Vets are readily treatable in the field?

Colic is abdominal pain, of varying severity. As many of you will have experienced, individual horses may show this pain in different ways. Signs of mild colic may include restless behaviour, stretching (as if urinating), looking at the flanks, pawing the ground and kicking at the belly. More severe colic signs may include rolling, profuse sweating, and self-trauma.

Colic is not always caused by pain from the digestive tract- some conditions will also cause abdominal pain- or 'false colic', such as pain from the ovaries or broken ribs.

There are many different causes of colic. At this time of the year in particular, we see a lot of horses with spasmodic colic.

This is where overactivity- or 'spasm'- of the intestinal tract causes pain. Spasmodic colic in the horse has many causes, usually simple changes in management such as being brought in from pasture and starting on a new diet (hence why we're seeing so much of it now). Tapeworms and small red-worms play a role in spasmodic colics, so we always recommend clients keep up to date with worming programmes and it is usually beneficial to worm affected animals within 7 - 10 days of having



Prompt referral for surgery is essential for a successful outcome

colic, with a medicine such as Equimax or Eqvalan duo, both of which treat adult stages of redworm and tapeworm.

It is important that veterinary attention is sought for all colic cases. While many

cases turn out to be the simple spasmodic type, other causes of gut pain such as impactions need to be identified early for the best chance of successful treatment. The small proportion of colic cases which are due to catastrophic gut events (such as twisted or trapped bowel) also need to be identified as early as possible.

So what can you expect when we examine a horse with colic? Most require a rectal examination in the first instance, and we usually give a small painkiller to make this as safe as possible for your horse. If spasmodic colic is diagnosed, an anti-spasmodic may be administered to ease any discomfort. Horses should be put in a warm, deep bedded stable and you may be advised to walk them in hand every couple of hours. Usually it is best to starve the horse overnight and feed easily digestible foods, such as grass, the following day.

Breeding Season 2005 ..

After a successful 2004 breeding season, we are expanding the services that we offer. This year we will also be offering stallion semen collection, packaging and delivery as well as widening our frozen semen service to mares. Artificial insemination is a useful way of breeding your mare, without the inconvenience of moving your mare to stud, particularly if the stallion is far away. Most AI uses either chilled or frozen semen, which means that rather than transporting your mare to the stallion, the semen is delivered to you. The obvious advantages to this are reduced travelling and livery costs whilst your mare is at the stud, as well as reduced risk of injury to your mare and to the stallion. You can also choose a stallion from anywhere in the UK, if you are using chilled semen and, anywhere in the world, if you choose frozen semen. In addition, there is generally a reduced risk of venereal disease and the mare has a higher chance of breeding successfully, particularly where she has had problems breeding in the past.

Mud Fever & Pastern Dermatitis ...

With the damp Highland winter weather at the moment, the practice is seeing a number of horses with mud fever. Many of you will already be familiar with

the disease (also known as 'greasy heel' when affecting the heel/pastern area, or 'rain scald' when on the body), but we thought an update on treatment and prevention of mud fever might be of interest.

Mud fever is caused by the bacterium *Dermatophilus congolensis*. The bacteria survive in damp, muddy conditions and will penetrate soft, wet or damaged skin. This is why the heels are often affected- horses standing in wet fields have constantly damp heels. Horses with feathers are most at risk as obviously these trap moisture. Skin damaged by poorly fitting tack is also at risk, and horses standing in rain for long periods. In some cases, leaving a rug on too long will trap sweat underneath the rug, allowing the bacteria to penetrate the sweaty skin!

In affected areas the hair may appear matted and crusty, with scabby skin underneath. The amount of pain can vary from virtually none to severe. Some lameness cases presented to the practice turn out to be pain caused by bacterial skin disease.

Our approach in the practice to each case of mud fever varies with the location of the affected area and the severity of the infection. Should you suspect your horse has mud fever, get in touch with us as soon as possible in order that it is treated early on - before a small problem becomes a real headache! We usually recommend affected horses are stabled if possible, and the diseased area of skin clipped (but not shaved). Any scabs that may be removed painlessly should be removed, and the area washed with a dilute antibacterial shampoo. Those products containing chlorhexidine (e.g. Hibiscrub) are the best. Following this the area is dried thoroughly (very important!). Depending on the severity, we may decide to use antibiotic and steroid creams in order to further treat the area. Until recently a cream called Dermobion was available but this has been taken off the market by the manufacturer. We have managed to source some more of the large tubes and if anyone would like some,

now is the time to get it, because it will be unobtainable within the next month or so. If the scabs can be removed painlessly, then do so. If the horse is becoming upset at your attempts to remove them, then this usually means that there it more than a simple mud fever. Not all cases of mud fever are simple; many will have other complicating factors such as chemical burns, parasite infection and UV-light damage. If there is no response to standard therapy, we may need to investigate further.



An example of pastern dermatitis

Prevention is obviously important at this time of year. Here are some sensible suggestions to prevent mud fever!

-Try to look at your horse daily for abrasions, wounds and damp areas that might allow bacteria to invade the skin.

-Provide clean, dry sheltering or stabling to allow your horses coat to thoroughly dry out occasionally. We realise that for some of our clients this isn't always possible. For horses without access to shelter that are

prone to mud fever we sometimes try barrier creams to protect moist and vulnerable skin.

-Removing excess feathering with scissors sometimes helps stop moisture being trapped.

-Washing the legs after exercise (particularly with a little antibacterial shampoo) and drying them thoroughly is useful.

-Try not to put rugs on when the horse is already wet - make sure the coat is dry before putting it on!

Stallion Collection ...

Most stallions can be trained to ejaculate into an artificial vagina and if the semen is handled and transported correctly then sending semen can be a useful way of increasing your stallion's progeny and providing you with additional income. We can collect, evaluate and preserve semen from stallions within our geographical area. Please contact us in advance to discuss your requirements.

Barren Mares ...

Mares which have been barren, i.e. have failed to conceive in previous years should be examined thoroughly at the start of the breeding season. There can be many reasons why a mare has failed to conceive but the most common cause of poor fertility in mares is low grade endometritis which an inflammatory reaction or infection in the lining of the womb. This infection doesn't necessarily need antibiotic treatment because it is often caused by

a failure of the mare's clearance mechanism, but antibiotics are used in some instances. It can be very useful to perform a small biopsy of the lining of the womb, which would let you know whether the mare has any chance of breeding, or what treatments are necessary to help her. The biopsies are safe and we send the samples to a laboratory where they can be examined by vets who specialise in equine pathology.

Preparation for the New Competition Season ...

It is time to prepare your horse for the coming season! Dental care is one of our biggest jobs at this time of year so that animals can begin training with no sharp edges on cheek teeth. Sharp points particularly on the back of the upper cheek teeth can lead to biting problems and poor dressage results. To ensure a smooth start to the year, ask us to check your horse's mouth and show you and any potential problems.

To avoid vaccinating your horse during the competition season it is worthwhile bringing the booster forwards to February or March. This ensures that no days are lost as a result of vaccination. Equine flu can write off a season if your horse catches it in the Spring, so please make sure vaccines are up-to-date.