



## **EQUINE NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2007**

### **Gastroscopy Clinic**

The clinic will be held at our Equine Clinic at Rathmell on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> September and will be run by our equine team in conjunction with Tim Brazil, lecturer in equine medicine at the University of Bristol; the clinic is sponsored by Merial Equine Health. Tim will scope a number of horses on the day looking for the presence of stomach ulcers and showing a live feed to a video gastroscope. Stomach ulcers are increasingly considered a problem in leisure and pleasure horses. They can cause such problems as poor appetite, poor performance, weight loss, depression, failure to thrive, and even stable vices such as wind sucking. See overleaf for more information.



A presentation will be given by Tim before each scoping session, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The talks will give an in depth view into the prevalence of stomach ulceration, their diagnosis and treatment. All are welcome to come along to the presentation and watch the scoping, coffee and refreshments will be provided.

There will be 8 horses scoped on the day 3 in the morning session and 4-5 in the afternoon session. If you think your horse is showing signs of gastric ulcers and you would like scoping free of charge please contact the surgery to book a place as spaces are limited.



### **Barricade refill price**

If you bring your empty barricade spray bottle back in to the surgery we will fill it back up for the discounted refill price of **£5.88 (inc VAT)** as opposed to £8.80 (inc VAT).

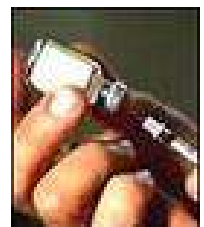
### **Weight clinic**

Following our recent purchase of horse weigh scales we are starting a weight clinic. This would be very helpful for horses and ponies under or overweight, particularly laminitic ponies.

Performance horses especially race horses would benefit from regular weighing so that the optimum weight for best performance can be monitored.



The scales are situated at our Equine clinic in Rathmell. Each weigh costs **£5.00 (inc VAT)** but if your horse is on a horse health plan, weighing is free of charge and a condition score of your horse will be done and can be recorded in the condition score page of the horse health plan booklet. We also offer a yearly subscription to the Weigh Clinic at a cost of **£25 (inc VAT)** per annum which includes unlimited weighing plus a weight record card.



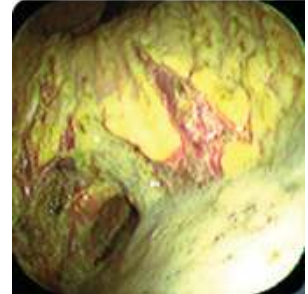
### **Vaccination reminders**

We would like to stress to clients that vaccination reminders are sent as a courtesy only and that the responsibility for ensuring your horse remains up to date with its vaccinations lies solely with the owner. Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

# Gastric ulcers

Horses, like humans, can suffer from 'gastric ulcers'. These erosions in the wall of the stomach are caused literally by the stomach digesting itself. It was only with the advent of endoscopes long enough to reach into the stomach of a horse (3 meters!) that the real prevalence of this condition became apparent. Studies since have shown that up to 60% of sport horses and 90% of racehorses in training have gastric ulcers. Left untreated they can cause a variety of signs from poor performance to recurrent colic.

**What Causes Equine Gastric Ulcer Syndrome?** The content of a horse's stomach is pretty nasty. It is very acidic and contains enzymes which digest proteins. To protect itself against being burnt and digested the lining of the stomach produces a mucus lining. Saliva swallowed from the mouth also helps neutralise the acid. Ulcers occur when the acid stomach contents overwhelm these protective factors.



## **What are the risk factors for horses to develop EGUS?**

### 1) Diet:

Horses naturally eat a little and often. This allows a steady production of digestive juices in their stomach and of saliva in their mouths, which neutralises the acidic stomach. Concentrates require less chewing than forage and therefore cause less neutralising saliva to be produced, increasing the acidity in the stomach.

### 2) Exercise:

The horse's stomach lining is divided into 2 distinct areas. The lower part is tougher, and has cells, which produce protective mucus. Because it is lower, it is normally submerged by the acidic food. The lining of the upper part of the stomach is more susceptible to ulceration. Normally it is not in contact with the acidic food. However when the horse is exercised this splashes the contents onto the upper lining, increasing the chance of ulceration. Horses in high levels of work are more likely to develop ulcers.

### 3) Stress or illness:

Both these will reduce the blood flow to the stomach, weakening its defence against the acid.

### 4) Drug therapy:

Non steroidal anti inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as phenylbutazone ('Bute') can decrease production of prostaglandins, a hormone which helps protect the stomach against ulcers

**What signs might my horse show with gastric ulcers?** Foals are far more susceptible and show much worse signs. They may salivate profusely, grind their teeth and develop colic and diarrhoea.

In adult horses the signs are usually more subtle. Weight loss, poor performance, decreased appetite, dullness, recurrent colic and wind sucking are often seen, although sometimes they show no signs at all.

**How can you diagnose EGUS?** Initially, your vet might be suspicious if your horse shows the above signs however examining the lining of the stomach with a gastroscope is the only way to make a definitive diagnosis.

## **How do you treat EGUS?**

There are several ways to treat EGUS.

- 1) Omeprazole (Gastrogard) is normally the drug of choice. It works by inhibiting the production of acid from the lining of the stomach, and is given for at least 2 - 4 weeks.
- 2) Feed low concentrate, high fibre diets (especially alfalfa).
- 3) Reduce intensity of training.
- 4) Reduce stress. Minimise travelling or box confinement.

