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EQUINE NEWSLETTER

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Staff news

Juliette Edmonds will be attending a course on Equine muscle diseases in April. Muscle diseases in the horse have been recognised for many years, but recently veterinary understanding of old diseases has grown enormously and many new conditions have been identified. This course presents the most up to date opinions and information on the most important aspects of muscle diseases, including investigative methods and treatment options.



Equine insurance

Accidents and unexpected illness can befall any horse or pony at any time - are you prepared?

Of course, in any emergency situation we want to do the best for your animal, but in some cases financial constraints limit how far the owner is prepared to go with treatment.

Consider what might happen if you found yourself with a seriously injured horse, or with a horse with severe colic - could you afford hospital treatment or surgery which may well run into thousands of pounds?

Veterinary insurance can provide peace of mind that, should the worst happen, you can have the necessary treatment without fear of large bills to contend with.



Remedial Farriery clinic

Dalehead run a remedial farriery clinic with **Wayne Preece A.W.C.F** this is on a vet referral only basis to address specific foot problems at the equine clinic every Friday. Wayne is available only as a specialist remedial farrier with the aim of taking difficult cases into the clinic allowing farrier and vet to communicate effectively together. Wayne has gait analysis technology and computerised foot analysis systems at the clinic to allow more in depth analysis. X-rays can be taken at the time or previous x-rays can be viewed to ensure the best treatment is undertaken. It is anticipated that horses will come to the clinic on a one-off basis or for a limited number of repeat shoeings before returning to their usual farrier. Wayne will discharge cases with copies of any foot analysis done, x-rays and advice on future shoeing. If you are interested in the clinic please ring the surgery on 01729 823538.



Topic of the month: Equine Stable Vices

There are a range of stable vices (which legally constitute 'unsoundness' and must be declared at sale). Most, if not all, of them have the same root cause - BOREDOM! When a horse, by nature an animal that spends a lot of its time 'on the move', spends up to 22 hours in a 12 x 12 'box', it is quite understandable that it will try to find ways to alleviate that boredom!

An estimated 15% of domestic horses are believed to exhibit one or more of these vices, which all involve repeated, stereotypic rituals. Experiments have indicated that these exaggerated forms of some basic, instinctive behaviours may be due to or triggered by natural, opium-like compounds known as enkephalins and endorphins that the body produces in response to stressful situations. There is also some evidence to suggest a hereditary tendency (which would explain why ALL stabled horses, kept in very similar conditions, do not develop any of these vices).



Cribbing and Wind Sucking - Wind sucking is the aspiration of air, done by the horse arching its neck and sucking in air. Some horses do this while holding onto something with their teeth; others do it unaided. It results in a grunting type of noise. The horse learns to gulp down air simply by creating a vacuum in the mouth. Traditionally wind sucking has been described as a cause of recurrent colic or failure 'to do well', but the vast majority of horses that wind suck suffer no adverse effects at all. An anti-cribbing collar may be used which makes it very difficult for the horse to arch its neck to gasp in air.



Crib biting is where horses use their teeth to grasp onto objects, such as their manger, or the top of their stable door, then arch their necks and swallow air. Crib-biting or wood-chewing occurs in both stable-kept and grass-kept horses. Although a nutritional deficiency may be an underlying cause, if the horse is being fed a balanced diet and has free access to a mineralised salt block this should not be the case. A chronic crib-biter will develop abnormal wear of the incisor teeth which could lead to digestive problems.



Weaving - Weaving is swinging the head and neck from side to side, rocking on the front feet. It may result in excessive wear of the front shoes. In a few cases the horse rocks from side to side to relieve the weight on painful feet. This unnatural behavior can also put a strain on the joints and tendons. Weaving is traditionally controlled by placing a V-shaped grille on the stable door to stop the movement of the head and neck. It may reduce weaving slightly but can make horses more stressed.

Box walking - Can be an aggravating form of behaviour but is usually a temporary response to confinement. The horse paces back and forth on the front wall or walks round and round in circles. This may lead to strain on the tendons and ligaments and joints. In some cases where the behaviour is due to a horse being left on its own a mirror on one of the walls may help.



Wall kicking - Occasional wall kicking is often associated with feed time (and fear the horse next door will get fed first). But occasionally it develops into repetitive, noisy habit that does no good to horse, stable and the nerves of the owner! Again boredom is a prime cause - but some horses appear to like the noise they create. A radio in the stable block or rubber mats on the stable wall may help in some cases.

