

Wright & Morten Equine Newsletter



www.wmvets.co.uk

August 2020

Payments

We are still getting a lot of queries regarding the BAC payments. Please ensure that you use the following details when setting up your BACs payment:

Independent Vet Care Ltd

Sort Code – 40-42018

Account No – 12724219

Reference – 2027 "surname" "horse name"

Just a quick reminder too that we are not taking cash payments if at all possible - card payments over the phone please.

Fun times!

One of the advantages of being based at Somerford is we get to see our clients having fun round the amazing farm ride! Here are just a few from the last couple of weeks.

Give us a wave at reception if you are passing and we can pop out and say hello!



Microchipping compulsory by October 2020

It seemed like a long time ago that we first discussed this, but now is fast approaching. From **October 2020**, regardless of their age, it will be compulsory for all horse owners to microchip their horses, ponies and donkeys. The new law has been introduced to crack down on abuse and improve animal welfare.

If by October 2020 horse owners have not microchipped their horses, ponies and donkeys, they could face sanctions from their local authority including a compliance notice and a fine of up to £200.

If your horse, pony or donkey is not yet microchipped, we strongly advise you get this done soon. Why not combine it with a routine visit, maybe your vaccinations are due? Don't forget this is something we can do on a zone day.

Just call the office on 01260 280800 to book a visit.

Vaccinations

Whilst we were on lockdown and horses were moving around very little, the risk of EQUINE FLU was very low, and it was deemed appropriate that horses were vaccinated for flu every 12 months, as we have done previously.

Now that some organisations and locations are back up and running, all be it with some limitations, it is important that you check with the venue and/or organisation re their current rules regarding vaccinations, as some may still require the 6 month vaccinations.

TETANUS – please note it is important to ensure that your horse/pony has a tetanus vaccination every 2 years so please bear this in mind when considering whether to book a vaccination or not.

We are very happy to come out and do 6 month vaccinations, as well as obviously the important annual ones as required. Please note it is **your responsibility** to make sure that you book your vaccinations in in good time so that you do not go over the 12 month anniversary of the flu vaccination.



Grazing Muzzles

Following on from our recent discussions on weight management we are focussing on the use of grazing muzzles as one strategy to help in weight management. Evidence shows that a grazing muzzle can reduce grass intake considerably.

Ultimately weight loss should be achieved through an appropriate combination of diet and exercise strategies.

This should include:

- Assessment of current diet and removal of unnecessary supplementary feed and forage.
- Calculating accurate daily rations and ensuring forage and feed are weighed correctly. eg: dry weight.
- No unnecessary rugging.
- Assessment of exercise levels and increasing frequency and intensity where appropriate.
- Turnout on suitable grazing.
- Monitoring weight and body condition regularly.

It is important to address these issues earlier rather than later to avoid obesity related diseases by preventing excessive weight gain.

Grazing muzzles are used to RESTRICT grass intake, NOT to prevent a horse from eating. Restricted grass intake is important for horses with a tendency to gain weight, or that are susceptible to laminitis. Grazing muzzles come in different shapes and sizes but they are all designed to do the same job. Choice of grazing muzzle will depend on individual fit according to the horse's head conformation.

Monitoring the value of the muzzle:

It is imperative to monitor your horse's weight through regular weigh taping. It is important not to assume the introduction of a grazing muzzle will inevitably control the weight gain or lead to weight loss in your horse. A combination of management factors is often required.

A healthy rate of weight loss is 1% body weight per week after initial loss due to change in gut fill. Measure and monitor with the same equipment at the same time of day.

Close monitoring is necessary to find the optimum time the muzzle is worn for, whilst gradually making any necessary adjustments and continuing with the other management strategies.

Which muzzle?

There are several different types of muzzle each with different designs and materials.

Some attach directly to the headcollar whilst others can be worn independently.



When not to use a muzzle

Perseverance is often required but be aware that grazing muzzles may not be the ideal solution for every horse. Prolonged periods of not eating or drinking are a serious concern and can occur in situations where the horse isn't sure how to use the muzzle or isn't happy wearing it. In these situations the muzzle should be removed. Check you have introduced the muzzle successfully. The horse should accept each small step before moving to the next stage of its training. This is why understanding the signs of discomfort and distress is so important. If you need help with this at all, just ask us.

Introducing a grazing muzzle

There are some helpful steps to introduce a muzzle on beva.org.uk - grazing muzzle. Alternatively please give us a call on 01260 280800 and we are happy to discuss this further.



Checklist:

- Ensure you've introduced a muzzle sensitively as explained.
- Make sure the horse is grazing comfortably and is able to drink with ease.
- Know your horse's normal behaviour and not any changes.
- Monitor any behavioural changes and ensure your horse has been accepted back into the herd.
- Make sure water buckets/ troughs have smooth edges with no handles to prevent the horse being caught up.
- Fence off any potential hazards where the muzzle could become caught.
- Plan to monitor weight weekly.

Potential Welfare Issues:

Here are some of the potential risks which underline the need for consideration of their use:

Rubbing – common areas of rubbing can occur on the poll, behind the ears, top of the horse's muzzle, lips and points of cheek bones.

Debris – sand, rubble and mud can collect inside the muzzle.

Dentition – as a minimum your horse should have an annual dental check by your vet or equine dental technician registered with the British Association of Equine Dental Technicians (BAEDT).

Grazing length – grazing muzzles should not be worn on short grazing as incisors are at risk of abnormal wear after extended periods of time. Horses wearing grazing muzzles may also struggle to consume particularly long blades of grass. It is important to note that some horses will get frustrated with the muzzle, particularly when grazing is too long or short. In these circumstances frustration behaviours such as bashing the ground with the muzzle have been observed.

Getting caught – avoid risk of entrapment or being caught up by fencing off potential hazards.

Behavioural restrictions – placing a muzzle over the horse's mouth impedes its ability to groom itself or others. It can also affect herd dynamics by masking visual mouth movements and restricting its ability to defend itself by warning other horses through facial expressions.