

Wright & Morten Equine Newsletter



www.wmvets.co.uk

December 2021

Equine Office Festive Opening Hours

Christmas Eve 8-3pm

Closed 27th and 28th December

December - Open as normal 29th to 30th

New Years Eve 8-3pm

Closed 3rd January

Open as normal from 4th January

As always we are operating a 24 hours a day emergency service over all of the festive period. Emergency visits can still be arranged using our normal number 01260 280800.



We wish all our clients a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Christmas Jumper Day – 10th December

As always we will be supporting Save the Children with our Christmas Jumper day on Friday 10th December. If you coming into the clinic or having a visit on that day, please feel free to join in!

Text TEAMWRIGHT to 70050 to donate £2

Winter Horse and Pony Care

Horses and ponies may show signs of illness at any time of the year, but certain conditions and problems are more commonly encountered in the winter months.

These may include:

- Dermatophilus congolensis infection, commonly known as mud fever and/or rain scald
- Colic
- Breathing problems
- Foot abscesses
- Weight loss
- Exertional rhabdomyolysis (tying up).

Whilst many of these conditions require veterinary treatment, some basic horse and pony management practices may help reduce the chance of them occurring in the first place.

Top tips for winter horse and pony care:

- Check the horse or pony carefully twice daily, paying particular attention to the feet and legs
- If the horse is prone to problems with mud fever then consider stabling for part of the day or night. Also bandaging legs, or partially drying them with a towel may help, and apply a barrier cream before turnout
- Remove any rugs daily to check for sore or rubbed areas and ensure there are no leaks
- Ensure your horse is getting enough water, especially when it's freezing cold – offering slightly warmed water may help encourage drinking; feeding warm, sloppy feeds is an alternative. Check water troughs twice daily and break ice if necessary

- Pick out the feet twice daily
- Keep feet regularly trimmed to prevent cracks in the hoof wall from forming
- Provide somewhere dry to stand if possible, or alternate paddocks so the ground doesn't become too poached
- Make sure the horse's worming programme is up to date. It is particularly important to remember to treat for encysted larvae during the winter months to prevent disease in the spring
- Minimise exposure to dust allergens if your horse is prone to breathing problems. Choosing dust extracted bedding, and feeding either soaked hay or haylage will help. Remember to avoid feeding dry hay in the field too!
- Keep diet as constant as possible, and make any necessary changes gradually. Feed according to each individual horse's requirements – remember hardy ponies not in work will need much less feed than fit, lean thoroughbreds
- Reduce concentrate feeds if exercise has to be suddenly curtailed due to bad weather to reduce the risk of 'tying up' when normal exercise is resumed

Clipping can help to keep horses comfortable and prevent sweating during exercise. Remember to only clip as much hair as necessary for the amount of work being done, and that clipped horses will generally require more feeding and thicker rugs.



Mud Fever

This skin reaction can be seen in any horse breed but horses with feathers are particularly susceptible and can rapidly develop to an established skin infection if not treated properly.

Potential Causes Of Mud Fever

- Trauma due to wounds, overreaching and incorrectly fitted boots
- Ectoparasites such as mites
- Poor environment conditions e.g. standing in deep mud or wet bedding
- Chronic exposure to mild conditions e.g. excessive washing and scrubbing
- Immune mediated diseases (e.g. contact allergic hypersensitivity to dew or different plants/soils)
- Photosensitivity caused by altered liver function affecting only white skin, aggravated by sun light



Clinical Signs

These can vary depending on the trigger. Early lesions present with redness and loss of hair on the back of the pastern/above the heel. Chronic stages may show crusty scabs, ulceration, oozing or nodular masses.

Hindlimbs are mostly affected, and sometimes one hindlimb is worse than the other one. It can also cause itching and self-trauma, leading to abrasions.

If the horse has feathers around the fetlock, it is difficult for owners to observe these signs.

If left untreated, mud fever can cause cellulitis, chronic infection and inflammation of the soft tissues. This can in turn lead to a pitting oedema involving heat and pain, running from coronet to

cannon bone, hocks or even higher. At this stage horses present with lameness and may not bear weight on the affected leg.

Diagnosing Mud Fever

This involves history of progression relayed by the owner, environmental conditions, examination of the affected skin and is usually easy to make if the classic clinical signs are present.

In some cases your vet will take a blood sample to rule out photosensitivity caused by liver disease. Scraping or biopsies may be taken to look for ectoparasites, bacterial or fungal involvement, immune mediated diseases, masses or other skin disorders.

Treating Mud Fever

Treatment is different depending on the clinical signs shown.

Horses must be kept on dry, clean bedding or turned out on dry fields or paddocks. If mites are involved, treatment against mites must be started.

Washing with dilute chlornexidine, rinsing and drying the skin and application of antibacterial cream often helps too. The scabs and crusts can be debrided if possible. The scabs will fall off after a few days of treatment and care must be taken not to cause further trauma.

Chronic wounds need to be cleaned and necrotic tissue must be removed. Clipping the feathers is helpful in order to clean the wounds, keep the skin dry, apply the cream and to monitor the healing process. However, for horses that have to be turned out, clipping the hair might worsen the condition as hair can be protective against sun light and external factors.

If cellulitis is present, systemic antibiotics and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs must be



Mud Fever,
Winter is coming

started and in advanced stages corticosteroids might be necessary. Bandaging and bandage change a few times a day, cold compression and walking on dry ground will encourage swelling reduction. Appropriate treatment for individual cases should be discussed with your vet. Cellulitis can progress to lymphangitis, when the swelling goes from the coronet up into the groin, sometimes affecting the udder as well. In this stage horses present fever, high level lameness and lethargy.

Preventing Mud Fever

Mud fever is not easy to treat and recurrence is very common especially in the rainy season. That's why prevention is very important:

- Keep horses on dry and clean bedding
- During rainy seasons, avoid turning horses out on muddy fields and use outdoor boots/bandaging if comfortable for your horse
- Avoid recurrent wetting and washing if not needed
- If washing, rinse and dry the legs thoroughly afterwards
- Use barrier cream with caution prior to turn out as it could encourage bacterial infections
- Sand schools can irritate the skin and washing to remove the sand might be excessive
- Check your horses' legs every day, remove mud and dirt using a soft brush

All this information being said, if not noticed early, mud fever can cause infection and discomfort, therefore it can be difficult to treat. If you are not sure about the skin disorder that your horse presents, do not hesitate to call your vet!

Feather Clipping

Struggle with Mites/ Mud Fever? We are offering for the winter months a feather clipping service. In the clinic, we will clip your horses feathers (under sedation if required), and advise on treatment for mud rash/ mites.

Please contact the office for further information and to book an appointment on 01260 280800.



EQUINE CLINIC

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