

# EQUINE VET NEWS LETTER SPRING 2024



## Spring Castration Clinic 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024

- One day offer includes: clinical exam, castration procedure, hospital fees and pre-op meds\*
- Open to clients and referrals
- In clinic only (standard rates will apply for castrations on yard)
- Colts of <3 years old with 2 descended testicles
- Please bring their passport on the day
- Only 2 spaces left – book now
- **Cost: £200 under standing sedation, £250 under general anaesthetic (the vet will discuss this on the day)**

\*Excludes post-operative meds, any required aftercare, tetanus antitoxin (advised if unvaccinated) and overnight stays.

**PLEASE PHONE US ON 01224 740700 TO BOOK.**

See more information about castrations on page 5.

## First worm egg counts of the year due now!

Research shows 20% of horses carry 80% of the worm burden. Therefore, we are aiming to target treatment at these horses only. This helps to reduce the growth of wormer resistance. It also reduces the environmental impact from the excretion of these strong chemicals in faeces. In particular, wormers have significantly contributed to the decline of dung beetle populations.

For a copy of our full 2024 worming programme, please contact the office and ask to be added to our worming mailing list.

Image © Shutterstock.com

## Same day Strangles PCR results now available!

We have recently invested in a PCR machine, which allows us to provide same day Strangles results. This can be used for guttural pouch washes (the most appropriate test for checking carrier status prior to moving yard), nasopharyngeal washes, and swabs taken from abscesses.

See page 4 for more information about pre-movement Strangles testing.



Ardene House Vet Practice, Kingswells, Aberdeen, AB15 8PJ  
Tel: 01224 740700 Email: [farmandequine@ardenehouse.co.uk](mailto:farmandequine@ardenehouse.co.uk)

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# SPRING 2024

  
ARDENE HOUSE  
VET PRACTICE LTD



## ARDENE HOUSE CLIENT EVENING

With guest speaker JOHN MARSHALL of  
Thistle Equine Referrals.



**At Bogenraith Equestrian 27th March 7:30pm**

 01224 740700     farmandequine@ardenehouse.co.uk

### **'An Inside Look into Lameness at Ardene House' with John Marshall BVMS PhD DipACVS DipECVS MRCVS**

We have a **few spaces remaining** for this exciting opportunity to learn more about limbs and lameness!  
**Contact us now to book your FREE place.** The evening will include **practical workshops** on anatomy, bandaging and wounds. **The Fern Restaurant at Bogenraith Equestrian will be open from 5pm** with a delicious set menu, however **pre-booking is essential**, so please **contact them directly to book a table!**

John is a European and American Accredited Specialist in Equine Surgery. He visits Ardene House on a monthly basis from Thistle Equine Referrals ([www.thistle-equinereferrals.com](http://www.thistle-equinereferrals.com)) for orthopaedic and soft tissue surgeries, as well as for complex lameness work ups and sports medicine cases. If you would like to discuss booking your horse in for John, please contact the practice.

**John's next available dates at Ardene: 22nd and 23rd April (March dates are fully booked).**



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## Staffing News

It is now the 1 year anniversary of **Mairi Sinclair BVM&S MRCVS** becoming our **Equine Clinical Director!** Poor Mairi may not have realised quite what she was letting herself in for, but we think she has been doing an exceptional job (and it is certainly no mean feat!). **She is particularly enjoying working with our equine team to make continual improvements to the services we offer, especially following feedback from our valued clients.** We are really looking forward to working closely with the equine community in 2024 to strengthen our relationship with clients, referring veterinary practices, fellow equine professionals and our network of specialists.



**Steffi Wood MA VetMB MRCVS** is our newest addition to the equine vet team, having joined us in July 2023. She is originally from Yorkshire and graduated from Cambridge University. After several years of equine ambulatory work in and around Edinburgh, she recently left the Dick Vet Equine Practice to move to Aberdeen and has fitted in well at Ardene. Steffi has a **particular interest in lameness and poor performance cases, as well as being part of our studwork team. She also has a soft spot for donkey cases!** Her spare time is taken up with her family and four horses of her own. She also loves hiking and climbing Munros and used to play a bit of polo!

**Beth Hunt BVSc MRCVS** has been **working mostly out-of-hours shifts** for 4 months now (search 'out-of-hours' on our Facebook page for more info). This has been working really well to ensure that all of our team are well rested for their working day, whilst allowing Beth to focus on her **Emergency and Critical Care Certificate.** We have had some lovely feedback from clients and are glad that this has been successful so far. Beth is still **available for daytime appointments every other Monday and Friday.** We plan to continue with this out-of-hours structure for the foreseeable future.



### Our equine vets (from left to right)

- **Steffi Wood MA VetMB MRCVS**
- **Marta Cominotti MRCVS**
- **Janina Kutscha Dr. med. vet. BVSc (hons) MRCVS Advanced Practitioner in Equine Internal Medicine**
- **Joanna Sak MRCVS**
- **Saskia Currell BVM&S MRCVS**
- **Beth Hunt BVSc MRCVS**
- **Austen Marr BVM&S MRCVS**
- **Mairi Sinclair BVM&S MRCVS**





## Pre-Season Sports Clinic 10th April 2024

One day offer for discounted joint medications:

- £200 for medication of a pair of joints with steroids (excludes sacroiliac)
- Additional fees will apply for medication with Arthramid and Synvet
- Discounted prices will also be available for medication of individual joints and sacroiliac joints
- The vet will discuss the choice of medication for each horse on the day

This offer is aimed at horses with previously diagnosed or suspected joint disease. It does not include a lameness work up or radiographs. If this is required, an appointment can be booked for an alternative day.

PLACES ARE LIMITED - PLEASE PHONE US ON 01224 740700 TO BOOK AND FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON PRICING.

## Which test to use for pre-movement Strangles screening?

Following infection from Strangles (with or without symptoms), 10% of horses will become a 'carrier'. This means they **harbour the bacteria inside the guttural pouches** (air filled spaces at the back of the horse's throat). The bacteria can remain dormant for years and **shed intermittently**, particularly when stressed. Even a horse which has never left its yard can be a carrier, due to exposure from other horses coming and going.

Unfortunately, **the blood test we historically advised for this purpose has been shown to only detect 10% of carriers**. Therefore, 9 out of 10 carriers will be missed. This means **the only method which currently exists as a carrier status screening test is a guttural pouch wash**. This involves passing a scope with a camera into the pouches, via the nose. Whilst this is a more invasive procedure, it is performed under sedation and **most horses tolerate it well**. We are also now able to provide **same day PCR results**. It is important to remember that we still advise a **3 week isolation period wherever possible**, as there are **other diseases that can be spread between horses, such as Equine Influenza virus (Flu), Equine Herpes Virus and ringworm**.

**The blood test for Strangles can still be useful, but is generally more appropriate during an outbreak situation**. It can be used to help identify horses which may have been exposed to the bacteria and require further testing and/or treatment. **A single blood test does not give us much information**, whilst a paired test with a second sample taken 2 weeks after the first can indicate whether the antibodies to Strangles are increasing, suggesting recent exposure.

**A single positive blood test only tells us that the horse has been exposed to Strangles at some point in the past** – this could be 3 weeks ago or 3 years ago! **A single negative blood test does not tell us much either** because it takes 2 weeks for antibodies to increase, so the horse could still have been very recently exposed. Antibodies can also reduce to normal levels over time, which is why a **Strangles carrier can have a negative blood test**.



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## Castration FAQs

**Why castrate?** Often colts are castrated for management reasons. Stallions can be difficult to manage on yards, especially with mares. 'Tell a gelding, ask a mare, discuss it with a stallion... pray if it's a pony!'

**What age to castrate?** Colts/stallions can be castrated at any age, but it is rather fiddly on young foals and there are increased risks of complications in older horses. Therefore, we advise to ideally castrate colts between 9 months and 3 years of age.

**What time of year to castrate?** Spring and autumn are the best times, as this avoids flies in the heat of summer and the mud of winter, reducing the risk of post-op infection.

**Where can the castration take place?** Colts can be castrated at Ardene House or at the owner's premises if they are suitable. Standing sedations can often be done in a clean, bright stable. General anaesthesia requires a much larger space, such as a flat grass field.

**What does the procedure involve?** The surgical procedure is similar whether a colt is having a standing or anaesthetic castration. Both testicles are removed through incisions into the scrotum. The blood vessels and tubes running from the testes into the abdomen are crushed and cut. Generally, the incisions are left open to allow drainage. However, the exact method will depend on the age and size of the horse and the sterility of the operating conditions.

**Are there ever complications?** Whilst castration is regarded as a routine procedure, it is still an invasive surgery and complications can occur. General anaesthesia carries a risk in any horse, including the healthiest of foals. In terms of the surgery itself, complications can include excessive bleeding, post-op swelling and/or infection, and a serious but rare chance of herniation of abdominal contents through the wound.

**What post-operative care is required?** Follow your vet's advice for your horse, as after-care will be tailored individually. In general, we advise stabling the horse for 24hrs post-op, followed by turnout and exercise to prevent swelling. Painkillers will be given for the post-op period. Antibiotics may also be prescribed. Check the surgical site daily for swelling, bleeding, or signs of infection. Healing usually happens within 2 weeks. We advise that you do not turn colts out with mares for at least 6 weeks.

**Standing sedation or general anaesthetic?** In general, a standing castration can be done if the horse is tall enough to castrate without kneeling on the floor. The size and position of the testicles must also be considered, as well as the horse's temperament – sometimes an anaesthetic is much safer! The vet's individual preference is also important. Many vets in the UK and abroad will always perform castrations under GA, due to the improved visualisation and safety. If >3 years old, we advise the castration is ideally performed in our operating theatre under a general anaesthetic, due to the larger blood vessels involved. We may still perform the procedure standing, following a discussion with the owner regarding the increased risk of complications.



## Updated Vaccine Timings 2024

- Primary course vaccines and boosters given after 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 must adhere to updated competing rules.
- We advise following the datasheet licenced timings for the primary course and first booster, which if followed correctly will also comply with all competing rules (second vaccine given 4 weeks after the first; first booster given 5 months after the second vaccine).
- It is the competitor/owner's responsibility to ensure vaccination timing rules are adhered to; vaccination reminders from vet practices are a courtesy, but must not be solely relied upon.

	FEI and BE (Updated 2024)	BD (Updated 2024)	BS, BRC and PC (Updated 2024)	BHA (2023 continuation)	Endurance GB (Updated 2024)
<b>Second vaccine</b>	21-60 days after the first vaccine	21-60 days after the first vaccine	21-60 days after the first vaccine	21-60 days after the first vaccine	21-60 days after the first vaccine
<b>Third vaccine (i.e. first booster)</b>	Within 6 months and 21 days of the second vaccine	Within 6 months and 21 days of the second vaccine	120-180 days after the second vaccine	120-180 days after the second vaccine	Within 180 days of the second vaccine (150-180 days preferred)
<b>Subsequent boosters</b>	Maximum of 12 monthly intervals <b>(Plus, must have received a booster within 6 months and 21 days of a competition)</b>	Maximum of 12 monthly intervals (Strongly recommended to have received a booster within 6 months and 21 days of a competition)	Maximum of 12 monthly intervals (Strongly recommended to have received a booster within 6 months and 21 days of a competition)	<b>Not more than 6 months apart</b> (compulsory since 15 <sup>th</sup> January 2023)	Maximum of 12 monthly intervals
<b>Competing after vaccination</b>	Horses must not attend competitions/activities within 7 days of receiving any vaccination Horses are first able to attend competitions/activities 7 days after second vaccination				
<b>Additional notes</b>	Any horse attending a racecourse within 8 days prior to a race meeting will be required to comply with the BHA vaccination protocol; outside of this timing, horses must comply with either the BHA or FEI protocol The FEI protocol must be adhered to if entering any event operating under FEI rules, or if entering an FEI stable area				

## Brexit legislation changes affecting importation of chilled semen



As it stands currently, **30<sup>th</sup> April 2024** sees the implementation of the next stage of the **BTOM (Border Target Operating Model)**. This will have a significant impact on those hoping to inseminate mares using imported chilled semen from stallions in Europe. Crucially, semen will be classified as a 'high-risk' product and every package will need to have physical documentation checks before being able to leave the Border Control Point (usually East Midlands airport). As a result of these extra checks, **it is highly unlikely that semen will arrive at its destination the same day the plane lands**, and shipments are expected to spend at least an extra 24 hours in transit. This delay will present problems with sperm viability, as well as with timing insemination with ovulation. Discussions are ongoing within the industry and government as to how this situation may be resolved, but **until a solution is found the recommendation is either to use frozen semen from European stallions which can be shipped in advance and stored until required, or chilled semen from stallions standing within the UK.**





## Weight loss, Laminitis and EMS

We would like to congratulate these two horses (Fire on the left and Tonic on the right) and their owners for incredible **weight loss achievements, following their diagnoses of laminitis and Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS)** back in 2022. No cresty necks or abnormal fat deposits in sight now!

Both horses presented with significant foot pain and required a period of box rest to allow their feet to rest and recover, followed by a gradual return to exercise and turnout. Both horses received medication in the short term to help the initial insulin reduction, however **the key features have been the continued changes to diet, turnout and exercise**, to keep insulin levels low long term.

**Consider booking an insulin blood test this Spring to help assess laminitis risk.**

**An elevated resting insulin level increases the risk of laminitis by 5 times.** The ideal timing of the blood test is 2 hours after their highest daily sugar intake e.g. after a few hours spent grazing, with any usual feed given 2 hours before sampling. This will give us an idea of whether they are coping with the sugar levels in their current diet. **Pars Pituitary Intermedia Syndrome (PPID), which is also known as 'Cushing's Disease,' can also be tested for with a blood sample.** Cushing's can also lead to insulin dysregulation and laminitis.

## Watch out for spring grass!

**Spring grass is a risk factor for laminitis, weight gain and colic.** It can be particularly problematic if there is a sudden field change. Therefore, **we always advise any field changes are made gradually**, to allow the horse's gut to become accustomed to the change of diet. If strip grazing, it is worth doing this very slowly to avoid too much gorging on lush grass at each fence move. **A track system can be an effective alternative to traditional strip grazing, by reducing the grazing area whilst encouraging movement.** This is **beneficial for both the horse's feet and gut motility.** A track system does not have to be expensive; it could be a simple track around the edge of a field using temporary electric fencing. For some horses, **the use of a grazing muzzle may be worth considering** (see next page) to further restrict grass intake. Gradually increasing exercise can also make a big difference.

It is also worth keeping an eye on the consistency of your horse's faeces. Horses which have persistently loose faeces on spring/summer grass can sometimes be suffering from gastrointestinal disorders, such as **inflammatory bowel disease and may require investigation.**



## We are now Aberdeenshire's first stockists of the Thinline Flexible Filly Grazing Muzzles!

### *Flexible Filly* SLOW FEEDER MUZZLE BY THINLINE



Each package comes with  
10 low-profile zip ties to secure  
the muzzle to your halter

#### A soft, flexible, comfortable, effective and safe muzzle option for horses!

This patent pending design allows horses to graze lightly or eat grain slowly while feeling free and comfortable. It's open system allows for maximum air flow. The soft material keeps teeth and equine lips free from hard surfaces. Its flexibility reduces the risk of horses getting "hung up" on anything. It is rated to break before your leather turnout halter.

Package contains Flexible Filly Slow Feeder Muzzle  
and 10 zip ties to secure to your halter

Owners love seeing their horses comfortably  
eating in the Flexible Filly Slow Feeder Muzzle.

**Caution:** If you have automatic waterers please make  
sure your horse is drinking well before leaving him.

SOFT

Use the low profile zip ties  
to attach to halter. Trim  
away excess zips and  
straps with scissors

FLEXIBLE

For use with a traditional  
turnout halter

SAFE

Specifically designed  
to allow maximum  
air flow while limiting  
grazing and slowing  
speedy eaters

Flexible and more  
comfortable

EFFECTIVE

Flexible muzzle material  
is rated to break just  
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COMFORTABLE!

Keeps horses from feeling  
confined. Soft material  
prevents tooth wear and  
sores on lips and gums

Aids in minor  
cribbing  
problems!

Fitting: Attach with  
triangles to either  
side of the horse's  
face. This helps  
provide extra air flow

RRP

Small (mini to pony): £85.99

Medium (Cob/Horse): £87.99

Large (Oversized Draft): £88.99

[www.thinlineglobal.com](http://www.thinlineglobal.com)

30-Day Satisfaction Guarantee or your money back!

We often advise the use of a grazing muzzle to help with weight loss and to reduce the risk of laminitis. None of us would choose to use a muzzle if we could help it, but unfortunately we are often limited with alternatives. Much of the grazing we use for horses was originally intended for cattle with high sugar ryegrass.

We find clients are often worried about the use of a muzzle and we completely understand the concerns. However, we have sadly all seen the devastating effects of laminitis and would choose to use a muzzle over this. But it will depend on the individual horse and whether other methods can be used to reduce sugar intake and increase movement.

From our own experiences and feedback from clients, we have found the Thinline muzzle to be the most well tolerated and have therefore made it an addition to our Kingswells practice shop. Whilst at first glance it may seem like just a very expensive piece of plastic, it is much more than that! It is very durable (tried and tested by Beth and Rhona's destructive youngsters, Boo and Brock) and the design means it is breathable and much less 'claustrophobic' than traditional muzzles. The material is soft and flexible, which is kind to the front teeth and unlikely to rub. We can also order in the Thinline breakaway head collars and many other products on request.



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