

WENSUM VALLEY VETS

EQUINE NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2023



CARING FOR YOUR HORSES OVER WINTER

As we move into the Winter months, many of you may be concerned about your horses over this period. In this Newsletter we will discuss some of the conditions that occur more commonly during the Winter months. This will include:

- Colic and Feeding horses over Winter
 - Mud Fever/ Rain Scald
 - Breathing Conditions

Colic:

Increased periods of time stabled (reduced movement), changes to feeding regimes and reduced water intake can all result in colic occurring. Dehydration due to water freezing over or reduced intake can increase the risk of impaction colic occurring.

Symptoms:

- Flank watching
- Biting/kicking at abdomen.
- Laying down more than usual and lethargic
- Little or no droppings passed or passing small, dry mucus covered pellets.
- Off feed or reduced appetite

While this is a concern to many, there are measures you can take to reduce risk:

- Ensure access to clean water 24/7. You can add warm water to drinkers and bucket feeds during cold weather to encourage intake. (Horses can drink up to 40% more water when its warmer) Check water twice daily to ensure it has not frozen over.
- Soaking or steaming hay can also aid water intake.
- Keep diet as consistent as possible and any changes should be made gradually.
- If possible, encourage turn out or movement.



Diet:

Some horses may benefit from additional calories over winter e.g. those already lean or those that drop too much weight. However, we see many coming into Spring too fat.

Coming into Spring already too fat increases the risk of developing laminitis in later months. Winter can be a great opportunity to reduce weight due to less grass and colder weather requiring more energy expenditure to maintain body temperatures.

Maintaining a good exercise regime, not increasing feed unless needed and not over rugging during winter are easy ways to regulate weight.

CHRISTMAS OFFICE OPENING HOURS

Over the Christmas period our office will be open as follows – outside of these hours we will be offering our normal emergency service on

07850 230803

Saturday 23rd December
Emergency Only

Sunday 24th December
Emergency Only

Monday 25th December
Emergency Only

Tuesday 26th December
Emergency Only

Wednesday 27th December
8.15am-5.30pm

Thursday 28th December
8.15am-5.30pm

Friday 29th December
8.15am-5.30pm

Saturday 30th December
Emergency Only

Sunday 31st December
Emergency Only

Monday 1st January
Emergency Only

Tuesday 2nd January 2024
onwards: as normal

Mud Fever:

Muddy, wet conditions increase the risk of Mud Fever, also known as pastern dermatitis. This presents as painful, scabby and possibly weeping areas of skin typically on the lower limbs. Left untreated, infection can develop which can lead to cellulitis– a swollen and painful leg.

Wet, damaged skin allows an ideal environment for the causative bacteria (*Dermatophilus congolensis*) to grow resulting in the condition. Pink skinned areas are more at risk and we see more cases in heavily feathered horses as a warm and moist environment is easily maintained between the hair and the skin.

Like anything prevention is better than cure. Avoiding wet, muddy conditions is preferable but we appreciate during the winter months this is especially difficult. Keeping legs clean and DRY is the best prevention so if you wash your horse's legs down daily, ensure they are thoroughly dried too. Often it is better to wait for muddy legs to dry to then brush them clean.

Treatment involves removing scabby lesions and possibly clipping feathers, cleaning with dilute hibiscrub or iodine before drying the area and applying silver based or steroid based creams. If cellulitis develops veterinary attention should be sought, with our vets always happy to talk over the phone.



Respiratory Conditions:

Increased stabling and more hay feeding over winter results in more exposure to dust which can trigger conditions such as equine asthma.

If your horse is prone to asthma limiting dust exposure is the mainstay of prevention. Ensuring good ventilation in the stable, low dust bedding e.g. shavings, wood pellets etc, and soaking hay/switching to haylage are all measures that can be taken to reduce dust exposure.

**A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS FROM ALL OF US AT
WENSUM VALLEY VETS!**

