



# WENSUM VALLEY VETS NEWSLETTER

## What's included in our Worming Scheme?

Our worming scheme offers fantastic value, for only £65 per year, you will receive:

- 4 worm egg counts (WECs)
- 1 tapeworm saliva test (to be done between November and February)
- 10% discount on any wormers required
- 1 faecal egg count reduction test (FECRT)
- Unlimited worming advice by phone

The worming scheme could save you more than £44 per year!

Please speak to your vet at their next visit or call our office on 01328 864444 if you are interested in joining.



Wensum Valley Vets



## Managing box rest and providing enrichment

Box rest, and the changes to routine, socialisation, environment and exercise it poses, is inevitably stressful for horses and can be frustrating and upsetting for owners/carers. However it is often an essential part of the treatment and rehabilitation of illnesses and injuries. This newsletter outlines some of the ways to make box rest a positive experience and suggests a variety of enrichment ideas. We know that some suggestions for enrichment during box rest aren't feasible for everyone due to the structure or layout of stables, yard rules, condition being treated, dietary requirements or preferences/personalities of individual horses, but hope that by offering a number of suggestions there will be something for everyone!

### Companionship

As herd animals, physical contact is highly important to horses and 'social



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buffering' (contact with companion horses) can be used to offset stress. Ideally this would be over a half-wall or through wide gaps in vertical bars between stables to allow constant access to physical touch with companion horses.

However a similar solution may be tying your horse up to allow mutual grooming over a stable door or wall, with a preferred companion (supervised and when it is safe to do so) at times such as mucking out, to allow twice daily interactions. Alternatively if this isn't feasible, spending time daily grooming or scratching their favourite places and eliciting positive responses such as leaning into the pressure or twitching lips, has been shown to lead to relaxation and lowered heart rate. In addition a large or full length mirror could be used, with evidence showing that horses spend more time resting close to the mirror and interacting with their reflection. In some equine hospitals a horse mannequin is even placed outside of the stable to provide company!



### *Training*

Performing learned tasks and learning new ones, results in increases in dopamine (a hormone that promotes happiness) in horses. Depending on the condition being treated, physiotherapy exercises can be useful for maintaining strength and suppleness, as well as providing daily human interaction and acting as a form of training to complete a task. Carrot stretches can act in a dual purpose and can be further reinforced using clicker training and a target. Varying and increasing the difficulty of trained tasks will keep your horse's brain engaged and keep activities feeling fun.

### *Food based enrichment*

Providing challenging food based enrichment such as a treat ball or vegetable hung from the ceiling can vastly improve a horse's experience of box rest, and providing similar games/enrichment at the same time each day can add to their sense of routine being maintained. A choice of fibre sources such as haylage, grass blocks and chaff, where appropriate to their dietary needs, can help to stimulate the senses and promote interest. Novel tastes and textures will also add variety to the enrichment methods suggested such as varying the hung vegetable (swede, lettuce), freezing dilute fruit juice into ice blocks or chopped vegetables frozen/mint leaves in ice blocks to maximise use of the senses.



### *Environmental enrichment*

Environmental enrichment such as a scratching board (these can be homemade from broom heads screwed to the wall), salt licks, soft toys or a ball to play with can also be fun additions to their boxed time and many owners perceive that their horses are more relaxed as a result of play.

### *Medical Management*

Finally, if box rest is becoming very stressful for your horse or they are required to stand still and exhibiting behaviours such as box walking, bucking, kicking or stamping, then medical options to keep them calm and reduce both their movement and their anxiety are available. Please call us on 01328 864444 if this is the case or you would like to discuss their box rest more with a vet.

