



Damory Veterinary Clinic

Damory Lodge
Edward Street
Blandford Forum
Dorset
DT11 7QT

Tel. 01258 452626
Fax 01258 453548
e-mail: office@damoryvets.co.uk

Special points of interest in this issue:

- Sweet itch awareness month
- Information on Atypical Myopathy
- Welcome to Gemma

Also included in this issue:

- New digital x-ray and dental equipment

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First Sweet Itch Awareness Month

Janssen Animal Health is joining forces with the British Horse Society (BHS), Redwings Horse Sanctuary and World Horse Welfare to launch the first Sweet Itch Awareness Month (SIAM).

It will take place throughout April and the campaign will raise awareness of the serious and distressing condition sweet itch. Preventative measures will be highlighted that should be carried out to help alleviate sweet itch, together with the importance of management of the condition before the start of the midge season in the spring.

Lee Hackett, head of welfare at the BHS, comments: "Time and time again we come across horses that are suffering with sweet itch, it is a horrible condition that can be extremely distressing for horses and their owners. We are supporting SLAM because we firmly believe that knowledge and education are the key to preventing sweet itch."

Sweet itch is an itchy skin disease of horses caused by an allergic reaction to midge bites. Affected horses most commonly rub their mane and tails. It can become a significant welfare problem for many horses and ponies.

The condition is most severe in the Spring and Summer when the numbers of midges increase.



The prevention of sweet itch should include the following measures:

- Moving the horse away from standing water, boggy land and streams;
- Stabling around dawn and dusk when midges are most active;
- Use of fly repellents such as DEET frequently; and
- Covering horses with complete insect blankets such as those made by Boett (see below).



In addition Janssen Animal Health produce a product called Cavalesse that helps prevent sweet-itch.

Cavalesse is a natural food

supplement which contains a specialised formulation of water-soluble vitamins and minerals, including nicotinamide.

Cavalesse is available in a pack that contains sachets of powder and a gel. The powder is mixed with water and a measured amount given to a sweet itch sufferer on a treat such as bread. The medication is given daily during the Spring and Summer, and it is best to start early, before the midges are really biting.



The supplement helps horses maintain a healthy skin and promotes normal immune function.

The gel is used in combination with the powder. It is applied to the skin to help support natural immunity from the outside, whilst the oral solution works in partnership from the inside.

For more information on Sweet Itch, Sweet Itch Awareness Month or Cavalesse have a look at the Janssen website at www.fidavet.com or contact the surgery.

An unusual disease: Atypical Myopathy



Atypical Myopathy (AM) is an uncommon condition but unfortunately fatal in 70-90% of cases.

Some people may have heard about it, indeed there was media coverage of a number of recent cases in Cornwall.

The disease affects a horse's muscles resulting in severe damage. Patients may appear weak or show signs of pain (sweating, trembling, lying down). The signs usually progress to collapse and recumbency.

Muscle damage results in the release of myoglobin into

the bloodstream. When the damage is severe the myoglobin will appear in the urine giving it a dark brown colour (see opposite).

A blood test will confirm severe muscle damage.

Although a post mortem or muscle biopsy is needed to definitively diagnose AM, the combination of blood test results and suggestive signs usually indicate the disease.

One current theory is that toxins from a soil borne bacteria are responsible for the damage. However the bacteria, called *Clostridium*

sordelii, is found everywhere and it is not clear why some horses are affected and not others.

Spring and Autumn are seasons most associated with AM. Sudden adverse weather conditions such as cold and wet or harsh frosts seem to put horses at risk of it. Also horses in paddocks with lots of leaves from surrounding trees are at increased risk of developing the disease.

Treatment with intravenous fluids and various drugs has been tried but with limited success. Research into the cause is ongoing in Europe.

Welcome to Gemma



The equine team at Damory has expanded to five vets following the recent arrival of Gemma Heads.

Gemma qualified from the Royal Veterinary College in London four years ago and has worked entirely with horses since then.

She moves to us from the Sherborne area where she has been with Kingston vets for the last couple of years.

Professionally Gemma enjoys many areas of equine medicine including stud work. She is familiar with both pleasure riding and

competition horses.

Outside of work she enjoys the outdoors: Climbing mountains with her terriers, paragliding, and sailing in nearby Poole Harbour when it's sunny.

New equine equipment

Digital X-ray Machine

We have a new state of the art digital x-ray machine at DVC. The machine is highly portable and offers many advantages over traditional ways of radiography:

- Images can be viewed almost immediately;
- The quality of the images is superior ;
- Various measurements



such as hoof angles can be made; and

- X-rays can be printed out, saved for you to keep or e-mailed to your farrier

Motorised Dental Burrs

Our dental equipment now includes the latest power tools for equine dentistry. The new machines are much safer and more gentle on the horse's mouth.

The burrs have specially designed rotating discs for removing sharp points and hooks from the cheek teeth.

There are also specialized tools for treating teeth which pack up with food.

Many horses are happier to accept motorized dentistry without the need for sedation. All we need is electricity to power them!