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**Special points of
interest in this
issue:**

- New website
- What is RAO?
- West Nile Disease

**Also included in
this issue:**

Top tips on diseases
to watch out for this
winter



Damory Veterinary Clinic Equine Newsletter



Volume 4 Issue 4

December 2009

Introducing our new website

At last our new website is up and running. We would encourage you to have a look at the site which can be found by typing the following into your web browser:

www.damoryvets.co.uk

There are dedicated sections for pets, horses and farm animals. In each section there

is a wide range of useful information, such as:

- Downloadable newsletters and factsheets
- Links to useful websites such as Liverpool University's sarcoid website
- Healthcare tips
- Sections to keep up to

date about future meetings, disease alerts etc.

- Details about our veterinary staff.
- Information about our equine clinic.

Have a look and we would welcome your feedback.

Happy surfing!

Winter breathing allergies

During the winter many horses are stabled for longer and fed more conserved forage such as hay. As a result they are exposed to higher levels of dust and mould spores.

These allergens can cause a breathing problem known now as RAO. It was formerly called COPD or heaves.

Affected horses will cough,



especially when exercising and have a mucky nose. Severely affected patients will wheeze, just like an asthmatic. Indeed RAO is very similar to asthma.

Mildly affected horses improve when their hay is soaked for 15 minutes. It is not necessary to do this for any longer. More severe cases require haylage as they cannot tolerate any hay at all.

Stable bedding, particularly straw is a source of allergens too. Changing to dust-free shavings or paper is another key to the successful management of RAO.

Maximising turn-out is vital, even if this means rugging up and turning out: there is nothing better than breathing fresh air! Remember to keep

away from any hay barns.

Medication is also available to speed up recovery. Drugs such as *Ventipulmin* open up the lower airways which constrict during RAO. In severe cases, steroids are needed to reduce the inflammation.



However it must be stressed that although drugs will help, they are not substitutes for the important management changes outlined above.

Forthcoming events.....

Watch the website for details of our next client evening in January 2010

Look out for....

When it is cold and sunny the level of fructans (a type of sugar) in the grass is increased. This can be a trigger for laminitis, so keep an eye on those feet.



Finally a very Merry Christmas and Healthy New Year from us all at Damory.

West Nile Disease in horses

West Nile Disease (WND) is one of a group of diseases that were once considered to be tropical. Due to global warming they are increasingly being reported in Europe and it is only a matter of time before we see them in the UK.

WND is a neurological disease caused by a viral infection and spread by biting mosquitoes. The normal 'reservoir' of the virus is migratory birds. Therefore the disease is only found where mosquitoes and these birds live. Historically this was Africa, and since 1999 North America.

However with climate change, temperatures are

increasing and both mosquitoes and migratory birds are being found much closer to the UK. For example infected horses have been found in southern France.



Although horses and humans can be infected, an infected horse poses no health risk to us. The mosquito carries the virus.

An infected horse can show

a range of signs from vague depression to muscle weakness, twitching and wobbliness. Severely affected cases are unable to stand up (as below).



The incubation period from being bitten to developing signs of disease is between 3 and 15 days and the mortality rate is up to about 50%.

The disease has **not** been reported in the UK yet.

Do I need to vaccinate my horse?

The good news is that WND has not been reported in the UK yet, so there is no need to panic! But if you are planning to take your horse abroad, especially if this includes North America or Central Europe then we would advise using the new vaccination.

The initial course consists of

2 injections 3 to 5 weeks apart followed by annual boosters. Foals can be vaccinated from 6 months old and it is safe to vaccinate pregnant and lactating mares. Three weeks after the second vaccination the horse has acquired protection against West Nile Virus. The West Nile Virus vaccination cannot be given at

the time of other vaccinations such as Influenza and Tetanus.



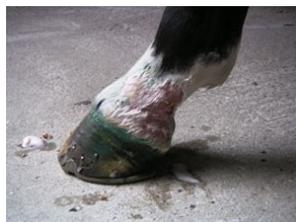
If you have any questions about WND or vaccination, do not hesitate to contact us at the surgery.

Prepare for the rain: mudfever and rainscald

If this Summer is anything to go by, we can expect another wet winter. Keep an eye out for **mudfever** and **rainscald** and take steps now to prevent them.

Both problems are fundamentally caused by prolonged wetting of the skin

and hence are more common during the Autumn and Winter.



Legs with mudfever respond to being cleansed with *Hibiscrub* but the skin must be kept as dry as possible in the meantime. The ideal solution is stable rest until healed.

Rugs help stop rainscald provided the skin does not sweat underneath.