



## Damory Veterinary Clinic

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### Special points of interest in this issue:

- What is Cushing's Disease?
- New products launched
- An update on Swamp Fever

### Also included in this issue:

- What to look out for this Winter

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## Equine Cushing's Disease

Equine Cushing's Disease (ECD) is a common hormonal disease of older horses and ponies.

ECD is caused by long term low grade damage to certain nerves in the brain. This causes an over-activity of the pituitary gland. The final result is an increased production of a variety of hormones.

A wide range of clinical signs may be caused by this chemical imbalance. Here are some to look out for:

- Long and curly hair coat
- Excessive sweating

- Weight loss
- Depression
- Excessive thirst
- Laminitis
- Prone to infections (e.g. foot abscesses and snotty noses)

The classic haircoat is shown in the photograph below:



Most of the signs are non-painful and gradual in onset. An increased risk of laminitis is the greatest concern.

In advanced cases of ECD, a patient may have most of the signs listed opposite. Indeed there are few other diseases that induce such a thick curly and sweaty coat.

However a reliable blood test is now available that will diagnose ECD at an earlier stage, hopefully before problems such as laminitis occur.

The good news is that ECD is treatable (see below) but this will be required for the rest of the patient's life.

## Boehringer-Ingelheim launch Prascend

Treatment for ECD aims to restore the normal chemical balance in the brain. A variety of drugs are available, but Pergolide is the most effective one at doing this.

Pergolide has been used for years to treat Parkinson's disease in humans. However the drug is due to be withdrawn from the medical market in the near future.

Fortunately, the veterinary drug company **Boehringer-Ingelheim** have just launched **Prascend**, which contains pergolide, specifically li-

censed for the equine market.

Prascend is essentially Pergolide under a new brand name but will ensure that we



have the best drug available for treating ECD.

Do have a look at their website at:

[www.prascend.co.uk](http://www.prascend.co.uk)

There are lots of useful photographs of the signs of ECD and general information about the disease and its treatment.

It is worth mentioning that some side effects can be experienced when a horse is first started onto pergolide treatment. This occurs only in a small number of cases.

Adverse effects include: mild diarrhoea, poor appetite, vague colic and depression. These signs will resolve but it is worth contacting the surgery if they are observed.

## Some Other New Products



**Zylkene** is a calming product that reduces stress in anxious horses. It contains a chemical derived from the milk protein *casein*.

It can be used to manage short term stress during procedures such as travelling or tooth rasping. It should be given two days before

and on the day of the procedure.

Behavioural problems may be treated in the long term with Zylkene.



**Activon honey** contains a medical grade Manuka honey. It is designed for certain types of skin wound

in horses.

Wounds that are being managed in a moist environment under a dressing are suitable for Manuka honey.

The Manuka plant contains special chemicals that have potent and long lasting antibacterial properties.

Other benefits include reducing wound swelling, improving odour and aiding comfort.



## Swamp Fever in the UK

Equine Infectious Anaemia (also known as Swamp Fever) has been diagnosed in two horses in the UK.

The first case was detected in January by routine post-import blood tests on a 'healthy' horse in Wiltshire.

A second case was identified in a sick horse in Devon in September this year. It is not known where this horse was infected, as it has been resi-

dent in the UK for the last two years.

The disease is caused by a virus and spread via contaminated blood. Usually mosquitoes are responsible.

The concern is that global warming may assist in insects such as mosquitoes becoming more widespread and able to spread diseases such as Swamp Fever and African Horse Sickness.

The take home message is that we should be ever vigilant in monitoring for diseases that were once thought to be tropical.

Don't panic though!

There has been no spread from the two infected horses. During the Winter the cold weather will reduce the feeding of insects such as mosquitoes that help spread these diseases.

## Mud and water awaits!



Now Winter has started keep an eye out for some of the problems that can be caused by the wet or cold.

**Mud fever** is more common when the skin on the legs is wet for prolonged periods. Regularly feel the legs and pasterns, and check for crusting or scabbing. White legs are particularly susceptible.

Damp feet may suffer from **thrush**, which is an infection around the frogs. Affected horses need to have dry stabling and the areas benefit from being sprayed with a drying/antibiotic spray such as 'blue spray.'

**Rain scald** is a very similar problem to mud fever. It is also an infection triggered by skin wetting. The top of the back and saddle areas are

particularly prone.

Standing in water can soften the soles of the feet. This can make **foot abscesses** more common. Regular picking out and cleaning your horse's feet will help.

Deep mud or frozen ground can be hard going for older patients with arthritis. Consider increasing their bute to ease stiffness.