

Damory Veterinary Clinic

Equine Newsletter

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- Coping with Winter
- Atypical myopathy facts
- Passport practicalities
- Pinworm resistance
- Let's go racing!

Have a very Merry
Christmas and a
happy New Year



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Top Tips For Winter Horse Care

With the onset of winter remember that your horse's requirements will change and some management changes may be needed to help prevent problems.

Shelter: Not all horses or ponies need to be stabled but do at least need protection from wind and rain. Indeed some hardy patients are more healthy when managed in the fresh air. Horses with respiratory allergies might need special dust free bedding and

haylage when stabled.

Feeding: Forage digestion is used to supply energy to keep a horse warm. Provide more hay or haylage when it's cold and the grass cover is reduced (snow or mud). Spe-



cialist fibre feeds such as *Fast Fibre* are useful in elderly patients with poor teeth.

Water supply: Reduced water intake can lead to impaction colic. Placing a football in a trough can help prevent it freezing up.

Skin care: Try to allow some time for your horse's legs to dry out during the day. This will help to prevent skin infections like mud fever which are more common in the wet.

Sycamore poisoning

Over the last ten years or so we have treated the occasional case of a disease called *Atypical Myopathy*. Affected horses present with signs related to severe muscle pain and dysfunction. Unfortunately the mortality of affected horses is up to 90%.



The cause of this disease has been unknown but speculated to be some form of toxin that is ingested. We have

known however that cases seem to occur during cold and wet weather. Also paddocks covered with fallen leaves in the Autumn seem to be particularly at risk.

Earlier this year the toxin responsible for *Atypical Myopathy* was identified and found to be present in Acer species of plants, of which the sycamore tree is a member. This has led to great concern in some quarters about the risk to horses.

It is worth pointing out that the total number of cases of *Atypical Myopathy* is very small, although often highlighted in social media such

as Facebook. Compare this to the number of horses that have access to fallen sycamore leaves.

The most sensible advice is to restrict access to sycamore trees during autumn but keep a sense of perspective. Provide supplementary forage such as hay to reduce consumption of the odd stray leaves.

The signs to look out for include: reluctance to move, lying down more, difficulty or inability to get up, brown discoloured urine and laboured breathing. If in doubt call the surgery for advice.

Equine Passports: The latest

Following the horsemeat scandal earlier this year it is clear to many parties in the equine industry that inadequacies have led to the drug phenylbutazone (*bute*) being present in horsemeat destined for human consumption.

At Damory Veterinary Clinic we have tightened up on the process of administering medicines to our patients. Indeed DEFRA plans to add further checks in 2014 which will add to the measures we have now put in place.

Please have a look at our factsheet on **Passports** which can be found on our website on the **Equine Information** page. This factsheet provides good detail about why we need to value the equine passport which enables us as vets and you as horse owners to continue using useful medicines for our patients.

In brief however the important message is:

- Ensure you have a passport for your horse.

- Sign Section IX if your horse is NOT intended for human consumption.
- Have the passport with you whenever a vet visits the horse or you collect medicine from us.

Don't worry If your horse has an emergency such as colic and a passport is not available (and no details have been recorded on our computer about the status of section IX) we **WILL** be able to administer effective medication but it will not be *bute*.



Pinworms: A pain in the backside

Recently the number of equine cases of pinworms has become more common. These parasites live in the rectum of horses. Clinical signs are seen when the female lays eggs on the skin around the anus causing itchiness. This irritation can be very similar to that seen

with sweet itch where the top of the tail is rubbed.

It is thought the worm's lifecycle has changed resulting in a degree of resistance to common wormers. Also most wormers are probably absorbed by the gut before reaching the pinworm itself!

If you think your horse could have pinworms despite conventional worming do contact the surgery. We have a special treatment plan that includes two oral worming treatments a week apart and a medicated wash for the rear end. This will usually clear up persistent cases.

2014 Point-to-Point season

The 2013-2014 Point-to-Point season is already upon us and we are looking forward to some racing in Dorset.

Damory vets will be in attendance at the following events in the New Year:

South Dorset Hunt: Sunday 2nd February 2014

Countryside Alliance: Sun-

day 23rd February 2014

Portman Hunt: Sunday 6th April 2014

Recently Damory vets attended the annual Casualty Management Seminar which was held at Aintree racecourse. It was a refresher on how to deal with emergencies on the racetrack. Practical sessions included how to



move an injured horse using a plastic dummy. Hopefully these skills won't be needed on race days!