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Special points of interest in this article:

- Introducing the Emergency Services Protocol
- Facts about anaemia

Also included in this issue:

- Farewell to Mike Nathan
- New apple flavoured worming tablets

Damory Veterinary Clinic Equine Newsletter



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Launch of the Emergency Services Protocol

The British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) has launched an initiative in partnership with the RSPCA, police and fire brigade. It is known as the Emergency Services Protocol (ESP) and aims to improve the care of horses in traumatic situations.

The ESP will help to co-ordinate the relevant emergency services, including vets. Some example situations would include:

- horsebox/lorry accidents
- horses stuck in mud, water or cattle grids
- horses caught in fires; and
- horses loose on the highway

The practice has registered with the ESP as willing to attend these emergencies irrespective of the ownership of the horse.

Also the ESP is involved with specialist training for

both vets and fire crews utilising new equipment. There is even a full sized plastic horse to practice lifting techniques! Melanie Wingate, one of our equine veterinary surgeons, has attended such a course.

ESP in action...



The benefits of the protocol were apparent during a recent incident the practice was asked to attend. A horse had fallen into the river Stour and was unable to get out.

Previously we have assisted in many horse 'lifts' usually using tractors with fore-end loaders and any available ropes.

However in this case, specialist lifting equipment was requested from the Hampshire fire service. After we had sedated the patient, a telescopic crane and special lifting harness (see photo) was used to lift the horse out of the water.

The combination of this dedicated equipment and a fire crew trained in such rescues made a huge impact on the safe recovery. Once on dry ground the horse was able to stand and none the worse for the experience.

Dorset fire crews will shortly have their own training horse which will help to increase their skills in assisting horse rescues.

Farewell to Mike Nathan

We are sure that Mike Nathan is well known to those of you with cats and dogs (or follow the events at Monkey World).

Mike joined Damory Veterinary Clinic over 30 years ago at a time when the majority of time was spent treating farm animals. Over the years he has been

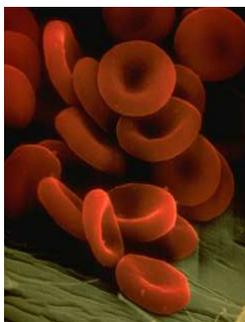
instrumental in developing the small animal side of the practice to its current status with five dedicated small animal vets working in the busy hospital.

At the end of this year Mike will retire and we are sure you will join us in wishing him both a restful and fulfilling retirement. On the evening of

Tuesday 23rd December, from 5.00pm to 7.30pm there will be an opportunity to wish Mike goodbye and meet David Harding and Cesar Sastre, the small animal partners and the other members of the small animal team.

Do come along to the surgery. Mulled wine will be served to get us all in the Christmas mood!

Disease facts: Anaemia in horses



A very Merry
Christmas
and Healthy New



Year to you and
your horses!

Anaemia is often given as an explanation of lethargy or poor performance. However it is not a disease but a sign of an underlying problem. The term 'anaemia' refers to a reduction in the blood's ability to carry oxygen, and is usually caused by a reduction in the number of red blood cells or each cell containing less haemoglobin or iron.

A simple blood test can diagnose anaemia by measuring the numbers of red blood cells and various features about them. If the anaemia is significant and/or persistent then further testing is required to find out the underlying cause. We classify anaemia into three main types depending on the underlying disease.



A. Blood loss anaemia: This is usually caused by a significant acute haemorrhage, usually due to trauma (eg. laceration to an artery on the leg). Fortunately a horse has a large volume of blood (about 45 pints in a 14 hh pony) and it would need to

lose a couple of pints before you notice any signs. Mild chronic blood loss (eg. redworm damage or stomach ulcers) can be more subtle to notice, as the body adjusts to the deficit.

2. Haemolytic anaemia: This is where the red blood cells are broken down within the body and is a less common form of anaemia. Certain infections, as well as plant toxins or drugs can trigger this. Occasionally the body's own immune system attacks itself. With this type of anaemia you may notice yellow gums (jaundice).

3. Depression anaemia: This type of anaemia is caused by a decreased production of red blood cells by the bone marrow. It is caused by chronic diseases, tumours and toxins.

One of the **commonest causes of anaemia is a viral infection**. Often a horse will seem slightly lethargic without any other signs, and this is partly due to the infection depressing the bone marrow. Fortunately the anaemia is mild and usually resolves after few weeks of rest.

Diagnostic tests
A blood test will reveal the extent of anaemia and rule

out iron deficiency (rare). Further tests can be performed to look for underlying diseases such as liver and kidney failure, or infections. Sometimes a biopsy of the bone marrow is performed to assess how well the bone marrow is regenerating 'lost' red blood cells. Specialised tests can be conducted to classify the anaemia as 'haemolytic.' If the anaemia seems to be due to internal blood loss, a search for the source could include looking for stomach ulcers with an endoscope and faecal analysis for worm eggs.

Treatment

Mild transient anaemia often needs little more than field rest with no ridden work until blood tests show an improvement. Sometimes a drug called *miferon* is used to stimulate the bone marrow after a viral infection. Iron containing supplements such as *Equisup* can be used to help stimulate the production of more red blood cells. However a grazing horse will consume plenty of iron in the grass to replace mild losses.

Severe life threatening anaemia, such as a burst internal artery requires a transfusion. This is technically possible but time is required to find a suitable donor and careful monitoring is required during transfusion.

New apple flavoured worming tablets



Virbac has launched a new palatable wormer in a tablet form. The *Equimax tabs* are apple flavoured and horses will willingly eat them when offered from your hand.

We appreciate that some

horses are very difficult to administer a wormer to using traditional syringes. Hopefully the tablets will ease the process.

A 'placebo' tablet is included

in the package which tastes exactly the same as the wormer but contains no drug. You can use these placebos to check your horse will eat the tablets without wasting any money.