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Special points of interest in this issue:

- Facts about some Summer allergies
- A focus on sweet itch
- Introducing a new medication called Cavalesse

Don't forget our Summer opening hours:

From May to September you can book routine visits from Tuesday to Thursday until 8pm.

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Summer allergic diseases: lumps, bumps and wheezes!

During the Summer months there is an increase in the number of horses suffering allergic reactions. Here are a few common examples your horse could experience.

Urticaria (nettle rash)

This is a type of skin reaction that can be triggered by one of a number of different 'allergens.' It could be a substance that has been eaten, breathed in or contacted through the skin. Although food allergy is usually blamed, urticaria is simply a skin response to any allergen experienced by the body.

The skin lumps usually come up very quickly: sometimes you can see them swelling up over just 5 to 10 minutes. The neck and flanks are most commonly affected (see below), but any part of the body can be 'bumpy'.



The lumps vary in size and can be as large as a dinner plate. Also the number of lumps varies and occasionally the whole body is covered: as

if the horse has rolled in a nettle bush.

However, don't panic!

Often an affected horse will be very itchy and could look as if it has colic, trying to roll. Other patients can be dull but the condition is rarely life threatening.

If your horse has urticaria, call the surgery. In many cases we will attend and administer a short acting corticosteroid that speeds up the resolution of the lumps. Usually they have gone after 24 hours.

Often the identity of the allergen triggering the reaction is not immediately evident. However, many cases do not recur. If this does happen, there are further investigative tests that can be performed.

Insect bite reactions

Insect numbers increase in the Summer and this year they seem particularly prevalent. Horses may progressively become 'sensitized' to biting insects, particularly flies.

The reaction that results is similar to urticaria, but usually only one lump is present. This is often painful and again can be large.

The treatment is similar to urticaria with corticosteroids being effective. Sometimes anti-histamines are used.

Obviously prevention with fly sheets and good insect repellents are vital.

A particularly nasty biter is the horse (Blandford) fly:



Sweet itch

This is a very common seasonal skin disease caused by an allergic reaction to midge bites. This condition is profiled in more detail overleaf.

Breathing difficulties

Summer dust and pollen can induce an allergic lung inflammation that causes coughing and labored breathing. It is similar to COPD.

The most effective treatment involves corticosteroids. Often these are administered using an inhaler in a similar way to an asthmatic. This helps to reduce the side effects



The culprit:

Controlling midges will help reduce the risk of other diseases such as West Nile and African Horse Sickness.

Useful information is also available at the following website:

www.sweet-itch.co.uk

Don't forget....

Remember to apply a sunscreen (such as OzVet Sunoff) to pink skin. Non-pigmented muzzles and heels are particularly prone to sunburn over the Summer

Disease facts: sweet itch

Sweet Itch is the most common cause of itching in horses during the Spring and Summer months. The irritation results from an allergic reaction to the saliva of biting midges. There appears to be a genetic predisposition to the disease in some ponies.

Midges are most prevalent from April to October and sweet itch is most common then. The signs seen result from the rubbing and resulting skin trauma.

The worst areas affected are under the mane, head and base of the tail (see photograph below). Occasionally the belly is also irritated.



Horses suffering from sweet itch may spend long periods of time rubbing themselves on objects such as fences or chewing parts that they can

reach.

The signs to look for include: bald patches and broken hairs; crusting and scaling (dandruff) and open sores. Over time affected areas can become thickened and develop a 'corrugated' appearance.

The main aim is to prevent the midges biting. Once the allergy is established, it drives a vicious cycle of rubbing and inflammation.

Here are some suggestions for preventing sweet itch:

1. Effective insect repellants

We recommend using solutions containing DEET and these should be frequently applied; at least twice daily.

2. Stabling

It is helpful to bring in horses during midge feeding times (4pm to 8am).

3. Fly sheets and blankets

These will act as a physical barrier and stop biting. The blankets made by Boett (see photograph above right) are



recommended as they cover a large area of the horse.

4. Avoid 'midgery' areas

Paddocks near water, particularly if stagnant will have higher midge numbers

5. Cavalesse

See article below about this new preventative medication.

Once a horse is sore and rubbing, the following medications can be considered:

- Topical cleansing with hibiscrub and ointments
- Systemic anti-histamines
- Systemic corticosteroids

If your horse is itchy, do contact the surgery. We can advise on ways to help manage sweet itch.

Introducing *Cavalesse*

Cavalesse is a new treatment indicated for sweet itch but may also help other summer allergic skin diseases. Testimonials from vets who have used the medication have been very positive.

Mechanism of action:

This is very similar to that of anti-histamines in reducing the allergic reaction.

Effectiveness:

For the best results it should

be started before the main sweet itch period (ie. from about March until September). It will help prevent new lesions.

If used when an affected horse is already rubbing, it can still be effective in reducing itchiness in up to 75% of cases.

Formulation:

Cavalesse is presented as a box of 3 sachets containing

powder. One is mixed with water and a measured amount withdrawn once a day using a syringe. This mixture is added onto a treat and fed. Horses will need **3ml** and ponies **2ml**.

A cream is also supplied and used topically where the skin is rubbed or broken.

Please contact the surgery if you feel your horse may benefit from this product.