

**Damory Veterinary  
Clinic**

Damory Lodge  
Edward Street  
Blandford Forum  
Dorset  
DT11 7QT

Tel. 01258 452626  
Fax 01258 453548  
e-mail: [office@damoryvets.co.uk](mailto:office@damoryvets.co.uk)

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

- An update on the disease Strangles
- Advice on some Summer problems

**Also included in  
this issue:**

- New digital x-rays at Damory
- Information on new products

# Damory Veterinary Clinic Equine Newsletter



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## An Update On Strangles

Despite much research and public awareness, the infectious disease *Strangles* is still prevalent.

The condition is caused by an infection with the bacterium ***Streptococcus equi*** subspecies **equi**.

This results in coughing, nasal discharge, fever and a very sick horse. The lymph nodes at the back of the throat enlarge, which can make swallowing difficult (hence the name). These lymph nodes then burst and discharge pus.

Treatments are available but secondary complications,

such as spread of the infection around the body (termed bastard strangles) can occur.



A diagnosis is made by taking a swab of nasal pus and growing the bacterium in a laboratory.

On **Thursday 8th July** we hosted an evening at Sturminster Marshall Memorial Hall dedicated to this disease.

Simon Howarth talked about the disease and a fact sheet on the subject is available on the website to download at: [www.damoryvets.co.uk](http://www.damoryvets.co.uk)

He stressed that although Strangles is an unpleasant disease to suffer from, fortunately it is not a common problem in the practice.

Julian Radburn then discussed some problems that are similar to Strangles. He explained how we diagnosis the disease, and detect carriers using swabs. Some of the new developments in strangles research were highlighted (see below for more details).

## What's new about Strangles?

The good news is that there are new tools to help us fight the disease:

### Blood Test For Carriers

A sample of blood can be taken and sent to the Animal Health Trust (AHT) in Newmarket.

A simple test will detect if that horse has been exposed to the bacteria causing Strangles.

If the test is positive then that horse could be a carrier. A series of three swabs should be taken from the nostrils and sent for analysis.

### Rapid Diagnostic Test

A new test is scheduled to be launched soon that will deliver a rapid screen for infected horses.

The AHT is developing a portable test kit that will process a nasal swab and deliver a result indicating whether a horse is infected with Strep. equi equi (ie. has strangles).

It is hoped the testing process will only take about 30 minutes, providing a useful screen for yards.

### Vaccination

A vaccine providing protection against the clinical signs of strangles was launched six years ago. This was called **Equilis StrepE**.

However due to quality control issues it was withdrawn in December 2007. These problems have now been eliminated and the product is due to be re-launched in October 2010.

Do not hesitate to contact us at the surgery if you have any questions about strangles.

## Summer Skin Allergies



Every Summer we are asked to examine horses with allergic lumps and bumps on their skin. Most are caused by insect bites and this year there seem to be a larger number of flies about.

Fly sheets and repellents will significantly help to reduce exposure to the insects.

In other cases the horse can react to an allergen it has either eaten, inhaled or touched. The lumpy reaction in the skin (see photograph above opposite) is called

urticaria or nettle-rash.



Affected horses may be itchy and occasionally very irritated.

It is often difficult to identify the exact allergen. Severe reactions should respond to an injection of corticosteroid

administered by a veterinary surgeon.

Mild cases may subside if the allergen is not experienced again.

An investigation may be required for a horse with persistent urticaria. Systemic anti-histamines can provide relief in the short term.

For chronic cases, *Cavalesse* is a drug used for sweet-itch (a skin allergy to midges) but has been also useful in other skin allergies.



## Sunburn and Photosensitization

Just as people with a pale complexion need to wear sunscreen to protect from UV radiation, horses with a lot of pink skin need protection too.

Pink muzzles, and the backs of pasterns are areas prone to sunburn. We have found that products such as **Ozvet Sunoff** or **Filta-Bac** give reliable protection from UV radiation when applied before exposure.

Some horses burn very easily due to a condition called Photosensitization. A num-



ber of primary triggers can lead to skin inflammation when exposed to UV light.

For example horses with liver disease can suffer from photosensitization. A simple blood test can rule out this problem.

Certain plants (eg. St. John's wort) and some drugs can also render a horse vulnerable to sunburn.

**Sedalin** gel is a useful product that aids procedures such as clipping anxious horses. However a new sedative paste called **Domosedan** is now available for more difficult patients



## Digital Damory

We have a new digital x-ray developer at the practice which has improved our radiography service.

Digital technology enables better visualization of boney structures.

It also enables accurate measurements to be made from the x-ray. This is invaluable with cases of laminitis where the degree of rotation of the pedal bone is



assessed and monitored more precisely.

The x-ray images can be emailed to you, the client and your farrier.

In situations where we are investigating a lameness problem, the involvement of the farrier is often vital. For example a copy of x-rays of the horse's feet will guide corrective trimming and shoeing.