



NEWSLETTER

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OUR QUARTERLY UPDATE

Welcome to the team Ellen Heddle

A very warm welcome to our newest team member, vet Ellen Heddle BA ,VetMB, CertAVP (Equine Lameness) MRCVS.

Ellen is a local girl, graduating from Cambridge University in 2015 and has spent the latter part of her career focusing on lameness, poor performance and sports horse medicine.

Not long after graduating Ellen completed the internship at the Liphook Equine Hospital and then went on to work at a busy sports horse practice in West Sussex. Ellen then took on a position to work as the lead lameness clinician and anaesthetist at an equine practice in Devon/Cornwall before relocating back to Hampshire in 2024 to start working as part of the Equivet team.



Early on in her career Ellen spent time working for charities abroad and for a mixed practice in East Sussex. It was here that she gained useful surgical skills which she enjoys applying to her work in equine practice.

Ellen has her Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice in Equine Lameness Diagnosis and Therapeutics and has a keen interest in poor performance, sports horse medicine and diagnostic imaging.

Ellen is looking forward to being back in the area, both for work and to explore the countryside with her old event horse, Savvy and dog, Otis.

Sweet itch season



Is your horse or pony prone to sweet itch?

The time to act is now (between February to March), before the flies and midges come out.

Please contact us to discuss the available treatments.

TAKE OFF OR LEAVE ON?

Deciding when to remove your horse's rug!

Deciding whether to remove your horse's rug needs some consideration, as it can directly affect their wellbeing and comfort. The decision depends on various factors such as the weather, your horse's health, whether they're clipped and their specific needs.

One of the primary factors to assess is the temperature. Horses have a natural ability to regulate their body temperature, at a wider range of environmental temperatures, but extreme weather conditions, especially wind and rain, can challenge this ability. On the other hand, during warmer seasons, wearing a rug unnecessarily can lead to overheating and discomfort.

Observing your horse's behaviour and overall health is equally important. If your horse appears content and a comfortable body temperature, it may be an indication that a rug is not needed. However, if your horse is shivering or has a puffed-up coat, it may be wise to keep the rug on for added warmth.

Consider the horse's living conditions and whether they have access to shelter. Horses that spend a significant amount of time outdoors may benefit from a rug to shield them from rain, wind or snow. Whereas, horses kept in well-protected stables with adequate bedding may not require a rug as much.

Regularly check your horse's body condition and adjust the use of rugs accordingly. A horse with a thick winter coat may only need a lightweight rug, whilst a clipped horse or one with a thin coat may require additional protection. Some native breeds may not require a rug at all.

Ultimately, it's crucial to strike a balance between providing necessary protection and allowing your horse's natural ability to adapt to different weather conditions. Regularly reassess your horse's needs based on the weather forecast, their health and how well they are adapting to their environment. This way, you can ensure your horse remains comfortable and healthy throughout the changing seasons.

ON



OFF



SEAMLESS TRANSITION

A guide to safely introducing your horse to spring grazing

Transitioning horses to spring grazing is a crucial aspect of equine management, requiring careful planning. As the winter season gives way to spring, the composition of grass changes, presenting both opportunities and challenges for horse owners. Here are some key considerations and tips for a successful transition:

Consult with your vet

Consult with your vet or equine nutritionist to create a customised plan for transitioning your horse to spring grazing based on their individual health, dietary needs and any existing medical conditions.



Gradual introduction

Begin by introducing your horse to spring grazing gradually. Sudden changes in diet can lead to laminitis and digestive upset. Electric fencing can be useful to help control the amount of grass eaten.

Monitor grass growth

Keep a close eye on the growth of the grass. Spring grass tends to be lush and rich in nutrients, particularly sugars. Rapidly growing grass can pose a risk of laminitis or colic. Consider using a grazing muzzle to limit grass intake if necessary.

Regular monitoring:

Regularly monitor the body condition of your horse during the transition period. If your horse is overweight it's essential to address the issue to ensure the horse's health and wellbeing. Always consult with your vet before making significant changes to your horse's diet or exercise routine.





Supplementary forage

if you need to limit your horse's access to spring grass, supplementing with hay can provide a controlled alternative. Hay offers a consistent source of fibre while helping to manage your horse's weight and mitigate the potential negative effects of consuming excessive sugars from fresh grass.

Hydration

With the increase in temperature, make sure your horse has access to fresh, clean water. Proper hydration is essential for digestion and overall health.



Targeted worming

Assessing your horse's risk of a parasite burden in conjunction with the emergence of spring grass is a crucial aspect of equine health management. As the warmer weather arrives and pastures become lush with new growth, your horse is more susceptible to internal parasites that thrive in such conditions. Therefore, a well-thought-out deworming protocol, developed with the guidance of your vet, is essential to combat these parasites effectively. Regular faecal worm egg count monitoring and consultation with your vet are crucial components of a successful equine worming strategy.



By understanding the seasonal changes in pasture and the potential risks associated with rapid transitions, horse owners can implement a carefully planned strategy.

Please do not hesitate to call the practice for any further advice.

EQUINE WORMER RESISTANCE...

...and its growing challenge in equine health management

Equine wormer resistance is a worrying issue where parasites that affect horses develop the ability to survive and reproduce despite the administration of traditional deworming medications. These medications, known as anthelmintics, are designed to reduce internal parasites in horses and maintain their health. However, over time, some parasites can evolve and become resistant to the effects of these drugs.

When horses are regularly treated with the anthelmintics, the parasites that possess genetic traits allowing them to survive exposure to the medication will pass on these traits to their offspring. As a result, over successive generations, the overall population of parasites becomes more resistant to the drug, making it less effective in controlling the infection or parasite burden.

Horse owners and vets face the challenge of managing wormer resistance to ensure the continued effectiveness of anthelmintic treatments. This involves implementing strategic deworming programs which involve assessing the horse and yard risk and regular testing, including faecal worm egg counts. Poo picking at least twice weekly is laborious and time consuming but it is the single most effective intervention/thing a horse owner can do to reduce your horse's parasite burden and reduce the risk of resistance.

Education and awareness play a crucial role in combating equine wormer resistance. Horse owners should be aware about the risks associated with over using dewormers and the importance of implementing sustainable parasite control practices. By adopting a proactive and well-informed approach, the equine community can work together to minimise the impact of wormer resistance and safeguard the health of horses.



HOW A VET EVALUATES A HORSE WITH COLIC

Evaluating a horse with colic is a critical and complex process that requires the expertise of a vet.

Colic refers to abdominal pain in horses and it can have various causes, ranging from mild to life-threatening. The goal of the vets is to identify the underlying cause and determine the most appropriate course of action for treatment.

Here is an overview of how a vet evaluates a colicky horse:

1. Clinical examination

The initial assessment involves a thorough clinical examination of the horse. The vet will observe the horse's behaviour, vital signs and overall demeanour. They will check for signs of distress, such as pawing, rolling, sweating and restlessness.

2. Vital signs

Monitoring vital signs includes checking the horse's heart rate, respiratory rate, mucous membrane colour, capillary refill time and listening/auscultating for gut sounds.

Abnormal vital signs can provide valuable clues about the nature and severity of the colic.





3. Rectal examination

A rectal examination allows the vet to assess the condition of the horse's intestines, identify impactions, displacements, or twists and gather information about the severity of the colic.

4. Diagnostic imaging

In some cases, diagnostic imaging such as ultrasound or radiography may be necessary to visualise the internal structures of the abdomen. These tools can help identify specific abnormalities such as intestinal obstructions, torsions or inflammatory conditions.

5. Blood samples

Blood samples may be taken to evaluate the horse's overall health, assess hydration status and detect signs of infection or inflammation. Abnormal blood values can provide additional insight into the nature of the colic.

Further tests such as abdominocentesis, collecting and testing a sample of peritoneal fluid and passing a nasogastric tube can be helpful to determine the severity of the colic



6. Medical history

Gathering information about the horse's medical history, recent changes in diet, exercise routine or environment is very important. Understanding the context of the colic episode can help the vet determine the likely cause and appropriate treatment plan.

7. Response to treatment

Based on the initial evaluation, the vet may initiate conservative medical treatment, such as pain management and fluid therapy.

Monitoring the horse's response to treatment is essential in guiding further diagnostic steps or interventions.



It's important to note that colic in horses can be caused by a variety of factors and the approach to evaluation may vary based on the specific circumstances of each case. Timely and accurate diagnosis is critical for successful treatment and the wellbeing of the horse.

ESSENTIAL SAFETY TIPS FOR HACKING YOUR HORSE

Amidst the excitement of exploring tracks and enjoying the great outdoors, prioritising safety is paramount to ensure a secure and enjoyable ride.

Whether you're a seasoned equestrian or a novice rider, understanding and implementing key safety measures is essential for both you and your horse.

Here are some safety tips to keep in mind when hacking your horse, promoting a secure riding experience for all.

Wear appropriate gear

- Always wear a certified and properly fitted riding helmet to protect your head in case of a fall
- Use sturdy, closed-toe boots with a heel to prevent your foot from slipping through the stirrup
- Wear hi-viz

Check equipment regularly

- Before riding, inspect your tack, including the saddle, bridle and girth, to ensure everything is in good condition and properly adjusted



Warm-up

- Warm up your horse before engaging in more strenuous activities. This will help prevent injuries

Be mindful of terrain

- Choose appropriate tracks/areas and be cautious of uneven terrain. Avoid steep slopes or areas with potential hazards

Stay visible

- Wear reflective gear and choose well-lit paths to enhance visibility, especially during low-light conditions

Follow traffic rules

- If riding near or on roads, obey traffic rules and be aware of your surroundings. Use hand signals to indicate turns

Ride with a buddy

- Whenever possible, ride with a buddy. In case of an emergency, having someone else present can be invaluable

Emergency preparedness

- Carry a fully charged mobile phone and have a basic understanding of first aid for humans and horses. Know the contact details for emergency services and your vet, if needed

Listen to your horse

- Pay attention to your horse's behaviour. If they seem distressed or uncomfortable, dismount and assess the situation

EQUINE NUTRITION ESSENTIALS

How to craft a well-balanced diet for your horse with the right mix of nutrients.

Ensuring that your horse receives a well-balanced and nutritionally sound diet is essential for their overall health, performance and longevity. A horse's diet must encompass a mix of nutrients to meet its specific physiological needs, taking into consideration factors such as age, weight, activity level and health status.

Forage first

The foundation of any horse's diet should be high-quality forage, such as hay or grass. Forage provides essential fibre, promoting healthy digestion and preventing issues like colic. Aim for a mix of grass and hays to ensure a diverse nutrient profile.

Balanced energy sources

Horses require a blend of energy sources, including carbohydrates, fats and proteins. Concentrates like commercial feeds can be introduced, but their amounts should be adjusted based on the horse's workload and body condition. Too many concentrates can lead to problems such as obesity or metabolic issues.

Balancer

A balancer is a specialised feed designed to provide essential nutrients in precise proportions, filling the nutritional gaps that may exist in the horse's primary forage or grain-based diet. Balancers are particularly crucial for horses on forage-based diets, where certain micronutrients may be lacking. Whether the horse is an athlete engaged in rigorous activities or a companion animal enjoying a more leisurely lifestyle, a well-formulated balancer plays a vital role in ensuring that the horse receives the necessary nutrients for optimal growth, energy metabolism, and immune function.

Protein for muscle health

Adequate protein is crucial for muscle development, immune function and overall tissue repair. Include protein-rich sources in the diet, such as alfalfa. The protein content should align with the horse's age and activity level.

Vitamins and minerals

A well-rounded diet must incorporate essential vitamins and minerals. While good-quality forage provides many of these nutrients, commercial feeds or supplements may be necessary to address specific deficiencies.



Hydration

Water is often overlooked but is a fundamental component of a horse's diet. Ensure that your horse has access to clean, fresh water at all times. Hydration is vital for digestion and overall wellbeing.

Regular monitoring and adjustments

Every horse is unique and their nutritional requirements may change over time. Regularly monitor your horse's weight, body condition and overall health. Adjust the diet as needed based on changes in activity level, age, or any health concerns.

Consultation with your vet or equine nutritionist

For a personalised and accurate assessment of your horse's nutritional needs, consult with your vet or qualified equine nutritionist. They can analyse factors specific to your horse and recommend adjustments to optimise their diet for health and performance.



Remember, a horse's diet should be a carefully crafted mix of forage, energy sources, protein, vitamins and minerals, tailored to meet their individual requirements.

Regular monitoring and professional guidance are crucial to ensuring your horse receives the best nutrition for a happy and healthy life.