

HOT TOPIC - GASTRIC ULCERS

Gastric ulcers are thought to be very common in horses, especially those that are in race training or other competitive performance training. However, gastric ulcers can also occur in non-performance horses. Foals can suffer from gastric ulcers if they are ill or stressed. Gastric ulcers may be hard to diagnose as the symptoms may be vague and subtle.

The signs of gastric ulceration in horses may be:

- poor performance
- poor appetite
- weight loss
- dull coat
- mild or recurrent colic
- dullness and attitude changes
- behavioural changes

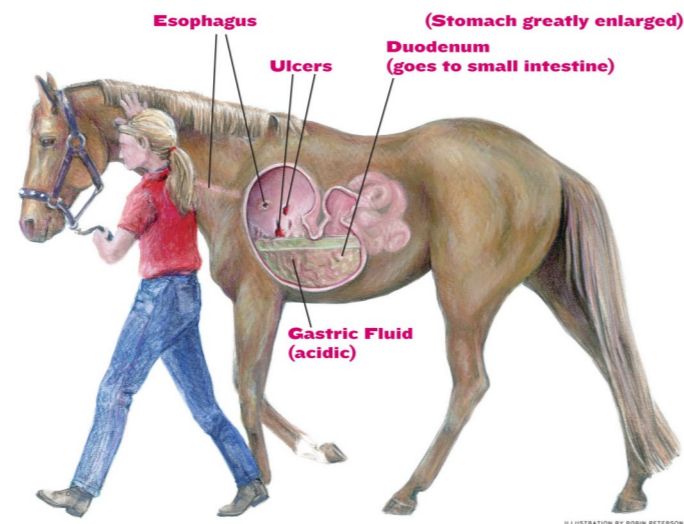
In foals the signs may be:

- frequently lying on their back
- poor appetite with reduced nursing
- poor condition with rough hair
- diarrhoea
- depression
- grinding their teeth (known as bruxism)
- intermittent colic
- increased salivation (known as ptyalism)

To diagnose gastric ulcers, a gastroscopy examination must be performed. A gastroscope is a long endoscope (a special instrument with a camera for looking inside the body), that is specially designed to reach the horse's stomach by passing

the tube down the horse's oesophagus. The procedure can be performed in a sedated, standing horse and is not painful for them. They must be starved before the procedure to empty their

stomach of food. Treatment is available for gastric ulcers in the form of a pastes, examples are **Ulcergold** or **Gastrogard** and many supplements are available to help prevent their recurrence, such as Ekygard, Protexin and Pronutrin (depending on the type of gastric ulcers present). Changes in diet and management can also reduce the occurrence of gastric ulcers. These include, as much turn out as possible, minimal concentrate feeds and lots of roughage in the diet.



Very small amounts of a fibre feed (for example an unmolassed chop), 10 – 15 minutes before exercise can also help reduce stomach acid splashing in the stomach that causes some gastric ulcers. This is because the fibre provides a mat on top of the stomach contents and also the chewing increases the alkaline saliva that buffers stomach acid. If additional calories are required in a horse's diet, up to 200ml of oil (in an average 500kg horse) can be slowly introduced and fed twice a day instead of increasing concentrates.

Catherine Speakman often arranges a specialist clinic at our Equine Centre to perform gastroscopic examinations and this can be easily arranged for anyone suspecting their horse may have gastric ulceration and wishing to investigate this.

Please contact a member of our equine team on 01729 823538 for further details of our next Gastroscope clinic date.



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EQUINE NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2015

STAFF NEWS

Sarah Scott our Equine Receptionist has been very busy this year and after studying at Harper Adams has now gained her AMTRA qualification as an E-SQP . Sarah is therefore able to give advice on prescription drugs (POM -VPS) for both equine and companion animals, for the treatment of endoparasites and ectoparasites. As such, if you have any questions about worming please call **01729 823538** and ask for **Sarah**.

SARAH SAYS

In late autumn/early winter time (November and December), it is wise to use a wormer which has activity against **encysted red worms** which are going into hibernation within the gut wall. **Equest Pramox** is recommended for this worming and has the added advantage of removing tapeworms, roundworms and bot fly larvae as well.

After this wormer, if your horse is wintered in the stable, it cannot pick worms up and worming should restart in springtime when turnout recommences. If over-wintered at pasture it may be wise to re-treat for encysted red worms with **Equest** in February when they re emerge from the gut wall.



TAPEWORM TEST

We would like to introduce a new Tapeworm test which can now be purchased via ourselves for £18.00 inc VAT. The EquiSal Tapeworm Saliva Testing Kit enables horse owners to simply and easily collect a saliva specimen from their horse which is posted free of charge to Austin Davis Biologics Ltd to diagnose the presence of tapeworm. Your results will be made available to you by one of Dalehead's Equine SQP's (suitably qualified person) along with any personalised worming advice .

You should **WAIT AT LEAST 4 MONTHS** since you last wormed for tapeworm before carrying out the tapeworm saliva test.

Ensure your horse has not eaten **ANYTHING** for 30 minutes prior to taking the saliva sample.

Tapeworms are recognised as a common cause of serious colic so require control. Unfortunately, routine worming strategies can cause worms to build up resistance to survive the worming.

To help ensure wormers stay effective in the future, using the EquiSal Tapeworm Test lets you know whether a wormer is needed.

CASTRATION OFFER

As usual, throughout **October and November** Dalehead are offering a discount on standing castrations when paid for at the time.

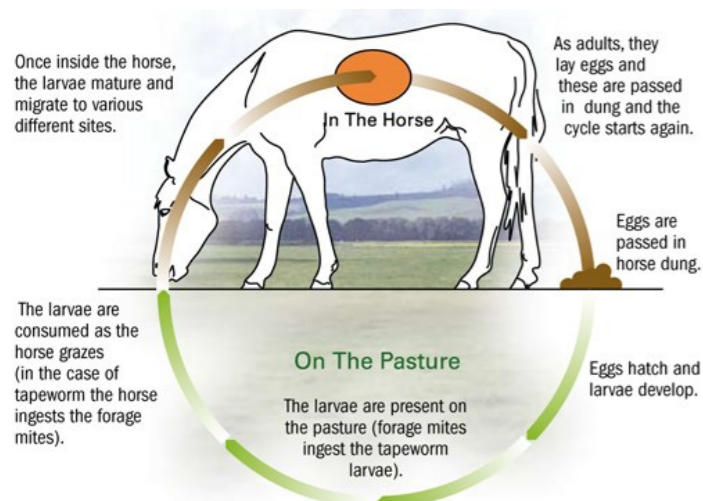
For castrations done at your own yard or stable there will be a discount of 15% plus your usual visit charge but if the work is done at our Equine Clinic at Rathmell there will be a discount of 20% and the benefit of no visit charge.

This offer does not include any drugs prescribed for post castration care or tetanus antitoxin.

Please contact Nicola or Sarah at the surgery on 01729 823538 to book an appointment or for more information.

Talking of Tapeworm Tests...

Just a little reminder to everyone about tapeworms! Tapeworms are common in horses and can be transferred by unclean stable and pasture conditions and through faeces. Tapeworms can live for years inside the stomach lining of their host and if allowed to grow in number can cause blockage resulting in colic or eventually the death of the animal. Tapeworms can be up to twelve inches long and they keep a horse from receiving proper nutrients from food. Most wormers do not treat tapeworm and tapeworm eggs can not be seen under a microscope with a worm egg count.



To test your horse for tapeworm a tapeworm saliva test can be carried out. This test measures the level of antibody to a specific tapeworm antigen. Horses with significant tapeworm burdens have elevated levels of antibody. The level of antibody gives an indication of tapeworm infection intensity. The test results are reported with a clear guide to interpretation, low, moderate or high infection intensity. A saliva sample is required to carry out the test. The full details are given on the front of our Newsletter and if you would like any further advice please contact Sarah at the surgery.

Efficient worming and how to keep worm resistance minimal

How does resistance occur?

For any drug to act, it must first bind to a specific target or receptor on the target organism – like a lock and key mechanism. Where resistance develops these receptors of binding sites on the parasite become altered so that the drug cannot bind. This means that the drug is less effective.

In any given population of worms, a small number may exhibit a natural ability tolerate a dose of wormer. This feature will be passed on to their offspring generation after generation, gradually increasing the number of resistant worms in a population.

Here are a few guidelines that can help avoid worm resistance:-

1. Use the correct dose of wormer for the horse's bodyweight - prior to worming few horses are weighed correctly (on a weigh bridge or the use of a weigh tape) and the amount of wormer they receive is based on visual interpretation. If worms are exposed to sub-lethal amount of wormer they are more likely to become resistant. If you would like your horse weighing at the equine clinic on the weigh scales please ring the surgery to book an appointment.
2. Rotate the type of wormer used each grazing season - if worms are exposed to a different drug with a different mode of action it reduces the chance of resistance. Note: some wormers use the same drug base so it is important to check which chemical has been used or follow the Dalehead worming programme which has been especially compiled by the equine vets. This is available from the surgery or online at www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk

3. Do not worm more than necessary - the more frequently worms are exposed to a wormer, the greater the population of resistant worms become. Due to the process of natural selection. The resistant worms will survive with fewer susceptible worms in the population. If good pasture management and faecal egg counts are being employed, it may be possible to worm even less frequently, which will slow down the accumulation of resistance.

4. Monitor wormer efficacy – faecal egg counts should be used two to three times a year to check the efficiency of your worming programme and determine the re-treatment interval. **Please note:** As advised, worm eggs counts cannot detect tapeworms so we recommend using the EquiSal test (saliva test for tapeworm) or an Equitape wormer. Tests are normally used over the summer when the majority of parasites are adult and producing eggs. In winter they are of minimal benefit, as they do not detect encysted redworm larvae.

CLIPPING GUIDE

As winter approaches your horse will be growing a thick coat to protect him against the elements. Whilst this may be ideal if he is not ridden much, if you want your horse to do more than the minimum exercise he will become hot and lose condition through excessive sweating. Furthermore, he runs the risk of catching a chill if he is not fully dried off after being ridden.

By clipping all, or part, of your horse you remove these problems, whilst also improving his appearance and making him easier to keep clean. The first clip of the season is usually done in October /November once your horse's winter coat has come through, but as his hair continues to grow during winter it will be necessary to clip him several times. Keep him warm and, depending on the type of clip you have chosen, keep him stabled, remember, A cold horse soon loses condition.



The Full Clip

Generally used for horse's in very fast work (e.g. racehorses or eventers) or to improve a horse's appearance for showing purposes. With

a Full Clip all the horse's coat is removed and consequently you will need to put thick rugs on him and keep him stabled in order to keep him warm.



The Hunter Clip

This is the other clip most commonly used for horses in hard work. It provides more protection against the cold as all the horse's

coat is removed except a saddle patch to prevent him getting a sore back and also his legs to protect them against the mud and the wet. Again horses with a Hunter Clip will need to be well rugged up and stabled to keep warm.



The Blanket Clip

This is popular for horses in medium to hard work, or for those with a very thin coat which feel the cold more, as it provides greater warmth

from the winter elements. This clip involves taking the entire coat off the horse except the hair on his back, hindquarters and legs. In effect keeping a 'natural' rug on him. Stabling and rugging - up horses with this type of clip will be necessary.



The Trace Clip

This clip is ideal for horses in moderate work as you can adapt the clip to the amount of exercise the horse is doing by either giving him a low, medium

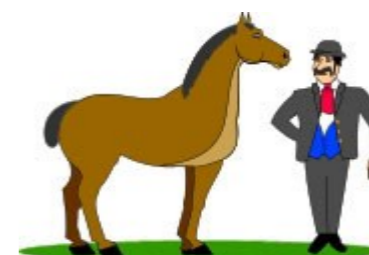
or high Trace Clip. This clip consists of removing the hair on the underside of the horse's neck and body; the more work the horse does the more hair is removed. Horses with a low Trace Clip can be kept outside providing that they are wearing an adequate outdoor rug.



The Chaser Clip

Some horses, such as thoroughbreds, have very fine winter coats and therefore do not sweat much even in hard work.

These horses are often given a Chaser Clip which involves only removing the hair from the underside of the neck and the belly.



The Bib Clip or Gullet Clip

For horses in light work that are kept in a field all year round the Bib Clip is ideal as the hair is only removed from the underside of the neck and the front of the

chest. Unless the horse is a hardy native type an outdoor rug will be needed in bad weather.