

STABLE CLOSE EQUINE PRACTICE
EQUINE VETERINARY CARE ACROSS HAMPSHIRE

Spring / 2024

EQUINE NEWSLETTER



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Vicky Jux returns: A warm welcome back!

We are delighted to welcome back Vicky Jux to the team after maternity leave. Not only has Vicky has another beautiful baby girl Mabel, sister to her twin girls Beatrice and Allie, she has also completed her Certificate of Advanced Veterinary Practice focused on diagnostic imaging whilst on mat leave- no small feat!

You may have seen Vicky back in the practice and on the road again over several days recently when she came to fill in for us - but we are all looking forward to March she will be a regular working team member again.



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 de-wormers 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.

Spring into success: Stable Close Equine Practice Spring Meeting

Stable Close Equine Practice is planning a Spring meeting for all our clients and friends at the end of April in Itchen Abbas Village hall.

We hope this will be, as always, a fun and informative evening, and if neither of these - then a chance to catch up with friends!

Keep an eye on our Facebook page for more details!

facebook.com/stableclose



Blanket worming:

Is a thing of the past!

Spring is the time to start thinking of **faecal worm egg counts (F FEC)**. The worms become increasingly active as the ambient temperature rises after the winter. The adult worms start laying eggs which are then detected in the droppings and can be analysed to give us an indication of the current worm burden carried by that horse. This enables a targeted worming strategy: a well managed horse could expect a low F FEC and would therefore not need treatment.

If your horse returns a high F FEC then a **faecal worm egg reduction count** can be carried out after dosing with a wormer to check whether:

- The horse is receiving sufficient wormer for weight and to confirm accurate administration
- The worms are being killed by the class of drug chosen - ie confirming the worms are not resistant to the drug

It is equally important to implement **tapeworm control**, especially in young horses. Tapeworms cannot be identified on faecal samples, although sometimes tapeworm segments will be seen in a pile of droppings if there is a sufficient burden. Blood tests can be used to analyse antibodies to a tapeworm infection and will categorise it as low/medium/high risk. Worming treatment can be prescribed on this basis. It is important to recognise that the blood test does not differentiate between current active infestations and recent infestations because the antibodies take time to subside even after effective treatment.

Tapeworm flotation tests can be performed after tapeworm dosing to confirm the level of current burden and to confirm effective treatment. This involves a sample being taken 18-24 hours after worming and submitted to labs specifically for this test.



Colic:

How a vet evaluates a horse with colic

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.



Body condition:

A guide to body condition scoring

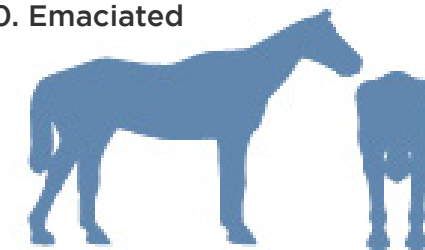
An important consideration for maintaining your horse's good health is thinking about their weight. An overweight or underweight horse can be a cause for concern regarding their health and their welfare, and both can make the horses prone to further illnesses. For example, overweight horses are at risk of laminitis and equine metabolic syndrome, whilst underweight horses may be suffering from gastric ulcers. As vets and owners, we can monitor a horse's weight using weigh tapes and body condition scoring. There are two scales for body condition scoring, usually we use the 0-5 scale, which requires a hands-on approach to feel for fat coverage on your horse. An ideal body condition score is 2-3 out of 5 depending on the breed and use of your horse - so a higher body condition score isn't better!

Key locations to assess for body condition score:

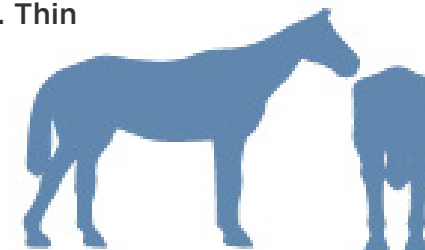
- **The neck:** Along the top of the neck is it cresty? Does it wobble? Or is it firm?
- **Ideal body condition:** Firm muscular neck, with no crest (except stallions).
- **The shoulder:** Where the neck and shoulder meet, is there fat in front of the shoulder blade?
- **Ideal body condition:** Clearly defined shoulder blade, no fat pocket.
- **The back:** Can you feel topline muscle? Can you see the bones of the back or is there a gutter along the back? Run your hand over the top of the back - is your hand flat or curved?
- **Ideal body condition:** Topline muscle next to the spine, a curved hand shape is formed when running along the back (there is no gutter) and the spine can be felt.
- **The ribs:** Run your hand along the side of the horse. Can you feel the ribs? Can you see them?
- **Ideal body condition:** Ribs easily felt with little pressure, but not easily visible.
- **The bottom:** Does your horse have a rounded rump? Or is it 'peachy' or concave?
- **Ideal body condition:** Muscle and some fat coverage make a rounded rump. Bones of the hips, top of pelvis, and tail head, can be easily seen and felt. No gutter is visible when looking from behind.

References: <https://www.worldhorsewelfare.org/advice/weight-is-your-horse-the-right-weight> and <https://www.bhs.org.uk/horse-care-and-welfare/health-care-management/horse-health/fat-scoring/how-to-fat-score-your-horse/>

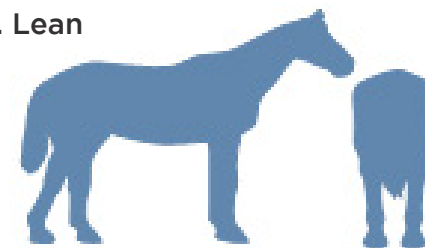
0. Emaciated



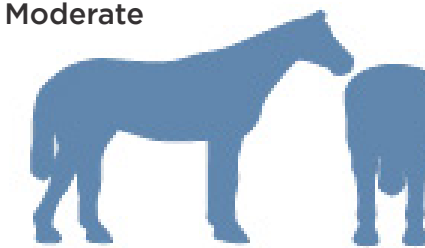
1. Thin



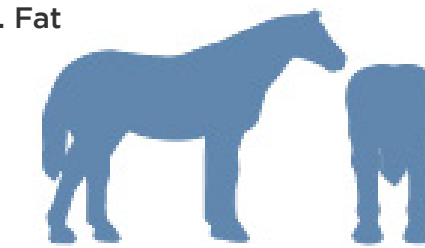
2. Lean



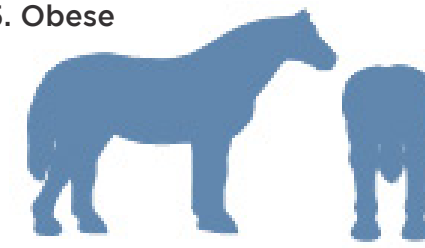
3. Moderate



4. Fat



5. Obese



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.

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.

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.

