

WELCOME to our spring edition of Horse Talk. As spring is fast approaching we're talking foaling, stomach ulcers and care of your young horses.

Gastroscope Day—Tuesday 10th September

Concerned your horse may have stomach ulcers?



Common signs of gastric ulcers include:

- ◆ Weight loss/failure to thrive
- ◆ Behavioural changes eg nervousness, irritability
- ◆ Dull, harsh coat
- ◆ Reluctance to train
- ◆ Girthiness, wind sucking, crib-biting
- ◆ Chronic diarrhoea
- ◆ Colic-usually intermittent, but may be severe

Please contact the clinic for information and to book your horse in for scoping

Management Strategies to Prevent Stomach Ulcers

- ◇ Horses should have some physical contact with each other in addition to visual contact.
- ◇ Ideally horses should have access to roughage—hay or grass 24 /7. Horses are designed to be continuous grazers.
- ◇ The more roughage (hay/grass) in the horses's diet, the less likely the horse is to develop ulcers.
- ◇ It is essential your horse is fed prior to exercise or travel. This includes walking exercise.
- ◇ It is important that the pre-work feed contains some hay or roughage. Feed in the stomach not only absorbs any free gastric fluid but also forms a physical barrier to acid splash.
- ◇ Decrease the number of times per week that the horse works, unless he's overweight!



Hock or Back Pain?

Many older performance horses develop inflammation and pain of their hocks that affects their movement and willingness to work. It might start with a slight tendency to deviate to the right or left or a bit of stiffness under saddle. The first sign you see could even be a sore back, and you'll think a chiropractic session will do the trick.

The equine hock is a complex structure that actually comprises four joints - it is the lower two of these four joints that are most commonly affected by arthritis. These lower joints don't move very much but provide some cushioning for the limb when it is under load.

Hock pain can often cause secondary back pain and so many of these horses will respond to massage and bodywork; however, the performance issues won't resolve until the underlying source of pain is identified and treated. Please call and book with Brett for a lameness evaluation.

Get Ready to Foal!

Foaling can be a bit nerve-racking and although mother nature usually sorts everything out, it is important to be prepared to step in if things don't go smoothly. Before your foal arrives, familiarise yourself with these landmark events which will provide a good indicator that everything is on track. Understanding what is normal during foaling and when to seek assistance during or after foaling are the keys to ensuring that both your mare and foal survive the event safely.

Vaccinating your pregnant mare 4-6 weeks prior to foaling will ensure that the colostrum will contain adequate concentrations of antibodies for the foal. If the mare is not vaccinated the foal will require a Tetanus Anti-toxin.

Labour Once your mare starts foaling resist the temptation to rush in and help. Intervening during a normal foaling can do more harm than good; nervous or maiden mares will often stop straining and walk off if disturbed. This could delay the foaling process and put the foal's life at risk.

The following guidelines which can help you decide when assistance is required:

- Stage 1 labour longer than 3 hours
- Stage 2 (straining) longer than 20 minutes

If you encounter the following, phone your vet immediately:

- Appearance of the "red bag" at the vulva (this is an emergency because it means that the membranes have not ruptured – the foal could suffocate)
- White bag appears (inner membranes) but no body parts
- Active straining but no progress
- Absence of straining
- Appearance of only one hoof at vulva
- Hooves upside down
- Hooves above nose
- Head presented with no hooves or only one hoof
- Foal's tail presented



Photo: MVS Equine

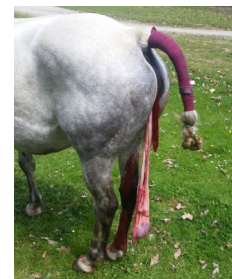
Healthy foals will stand within one hour of delivery and should nurse within 2 hours of birth.

All foals should receive a thorough veterinary examination within 12-24 hours of birth. A blood sample is also taken at this stage to check the amount of immunoglobulin (IgG) present in the blood. Foals absorb immunoglobulins from the colostrum through the lining of their gut only until about 18 hours of age. It is essential that the foal feeds regularly during this time to ensure enough immunoglobulin is absorbed. Ensure that the foal nurses and swallows properly. A healthy foal nurses regularly and empties the mare's udder, leaving it looking clean and shiny. Mares that run milk prior to foaling are likely to have poor quality colostrum.

The umbilicus should be treated immediately after the cord has broken with 2.5% iodine solution. This should be repeated daily until the end is sealed (usually by 3 days of age). The stump of the umbilicus should be clean and dry. Swelling is abnormal and may indicate a hernia, hemorrhage or urine leakage. This will require veterinary attention.



The placenta—the mare should pass the placenta within 3 hours—if longer she will require immediate vet attention. Check the placenta is healthy and uniform on both sides. It is very important it is intact—if not complete this can be life threatening for the mare and she needs urgent vet attention. Keep any placenta for the vet to check.



Meconium: is dark brown / black and should be passed within a few hours of birth. Excessive or unproductive straining and colic signs are abnormal. Make a note of the colour, consistency and amount that is passed. Meconium staining present on the coat at birth is a sign of stress that occurred in the uterus or during birth and is a warning sign for other serious problems including pneumonia. If you suspect this call the vet.

Allow mare and foal to bond. If foaling went well give the mare and foal time to bond, don't invite a crowd over immediately.

Should you foal your mare at home?

95% of mares foal unaided, but there is little time for errors and when things go wrong, it can be disastrous for the mare and/or foal.

There are several farms in the area who offer foaling down services with experienced horse people and the appropriate facilities (crush) for the vet to safely deal with retained placenta, post foaling infections etc.

Check both eyes for entropion regularly. In this condition the eyelid(s) rolls in and cause damage to the surface of the eye. Veterinary attention is required to correct the defect and treat any associated damage. Entropia can be caused by dehydration or systematic illness.

Any **swelling of joints or lameness** can indicate infection and requires veterinary attention

Foals can very quickly become seriously sick so any worries should be checked by your vet.

LOOKING AFTER YOUNGSTOCK

Looking after your newest equine star is important, but easy with the following reminders:

Tetanus Vaccination - Start your foal vaccination programme from 3 months of age. Two vaccinations are given 4 weeks apart, a third vaccination is given no more than a year from the second one.

Worming - Young stock are more susceptible to parasite burdens due to their immature immune systems.

Worming foals should start at 6 weeks of age with an ivermectin/ abamectin based drench. They should be drenched again at 12 weeks with a drench that contains pyrantel or fenbendazole.

It is important to do a fecal egg count on young stock every 4-6 weeks following this period and drench when appropriate.

Hoof Care —Unless your veterinarian suggests otherwise, foals should have their first trim around one month of age and remain on a monthly schedule. In those first few months of life, more attention should be paid to the structural integrity of the foot (size and mass) than to its cosmetic appearance. The goals are to promote the growth of thick, durable hoof wall; ensure maximum sole depth to protect the white line and coffin bone; and establish a strong heel base. A light rasp by a qualified farrier is often all that is required.

It's important young horses grow slowly— too fast and intensive growth—can be detrimental on the musculoskeletal system. Monitor the condition and adjust feeding. Aim for looking light/good but not too heavy.

These are opportunities to get your foal used to being handled in a calm and quiet manner before and after weaning —vital for the vet or farrier to safely treat them for paddock injuries or lameness. If planning to geld your weanling colts give them plenty of handling before their vet appointment. Colts can be castrated after 6 months.

