



VET notes

EQUINE & LIFESTYLE

MARCH 2012



Anna Huston

Anna has been working for Totally Vets for 6 years. First at the Feilding clinic and then moving to the Palmerston North clinic last year to work in reception.

Recently, you may also have seen her out at stud, helping our equine vets Barry, Margaret, Lucy and Katie.

Anna lives with husband Jeff in Pohangina on 22 acres with dogs Stein and Maggie, donkey Butterfly, and her horses, Genie, Bea, Dakota and Kahlua. Anna is a keen hunter with Bea in the winter, hunting with Manawatu. She has recently backed Dakota who will be the next in line!

Jeff and Anna enjoy 4-wheel driving, spending their weekends with Costa 4x4. Anna tells us that while Jeff is driver, she gets the salubrious job of official winch operator! We think she may have got the short end of the stick there!

We are looking forward to having Anna on board with the equine vets this year. She will also continue to spend some time in the clinic, so fear not you will still get to see her smiling face when you pop in to Palmerston North.

Cellulitis in the horse

Katie McKinlay

Cellulitis is a generalised infection of the subcutaneous tissue underneath the skin. It usually involves the lower half of the limbs and is often only in one leg.

Horses usually present with lameness and a history of sudden onset limb swelling. Lameness is variable but typically is moderate to severe. On clinical exam the horse may have a temperature and the leg is characteristically hot and painful to touch. In severe cases a yellow/orange serum may ooze from the swollen skin.

Primarily cellulitis is caused by bacteria entering the skin, usually through a cut, abrasion, or break in the skin (this break is not necessarily visible) resulting in a swelling that usually begins near the source of infection but will rapidly involve the entire lower limb.

The most common bacteria culprits are the *Staphylococcus* and *Streptococcus* species. These bacteria are part of the normal flora of the horse's skin which normally do not cause infection while on the outer surface of the skin.

Treatment varies depending on the severity of the cellulitis and prompt treatment under the guidance of a veterinarian will significantly affect the outcome. Antibiotic therapy will be initiated and often a long course is required to completely resolve the infection. Non steroidal anti-inflammatories are also important to control the inflammation and pain. Adjunctive therapy involves cleaning the wound, cold hosing, applying poultices and mild exercise.

Recovery depends on how quickly the condition is recognised and the severity of the cellulitis. The swelling may take a long time to subside in severe cases. Complications can include infection of important structures, skin sloughing and laminitis in the supporting limb where lameness has been severe and ongoing.

Please do not hesitate to contact us at Totally Vets for more information should this be needed.



Duncan from Fairdale Stud found the excitement of the Fully Fledged sales a bit much.



From the horse's mouth

LOTS OF GOSS THIS MONTH!

WEDDING BELLS FOR TARA

Our lovely Tara Jane at the Palmerston North branch is getting married on the 9th of March to partner Quayne. Our best wishes to them both for a happy future together. We hope you have a great day!

Our equine vet Margaret Leyland competed in the two-day Coast to Coast event.

Margaret had been training hard all year and was looking forward to completing the 243km multi-sport event.

The Coast to Coast is the world's premier multi-sport event. Held over either one or two days, competitors take in the magnificent scenery of the Southern Alps as they cycle 140kms, run 36kms and kayak 67kms of the Waimakariri River through the Waimakariri Gorge.

Equine Gastric Ulcer Syndrome (EGUS)

Lucy Cahill

What is EGUS?

EGUS refers to the presence of ulcers (a localized erosion) in the stomach of the horse. The horse's stomach is divided into two parts. The upper half has a squamous lining, while the lower half has a glandular lining; the cells of this lower half produce hydrochloric acid. Ulcers are most commonly found in the squamous part of the stomach.

PRECIPITATING CAUSES OF EGUS

Unlike humans, horses produce hydrochloric acid constantly, as they have evolved to continually graze. This means that in between periods of grazing, the acidity in the stomach

becomes very high. This is why prolonged time between meals, or food deprivation predisposes to development of gastric ulcers.

Other suggested causes include intensive exercise, delayed gastric emptying, high-starch diets, stress, severe illness, and exposure (particularly to prolonged or high doses) to non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.

Gastric ulcers in horses are quite common. The current estimate of prevalence in racehorses is 90%, in foals is 50%, and in sport and leisure horses is 37-66%.

DIAGNOSIS

Clinical signs of EGUS include bruxism (grinding teeth), salivation, colic, poor appetite, poor performance, altered behavior and weight loss. In foals diarrhoea is also a sign. In some cases the ulcers can perforate. This is more common in foals and signs of gastric rupture can include all of the above, recumbency and sudden death. There are several other possible sequelae to EGUS including gastro-oesophageal reflux, fibrosis and stricture formation. Most of these are more commonly seen in foals.

Endoscopy of the stomach provides a more definitive diagnosis and involves your vet passing a gastroscope into the stomach to visually check the lining. We can provide this service at Totally Vets.

TREATMENT

The aim of treatment is to decrease the acidity in the stomach. Treatment with a drug called Omeprazole ("Gastrozol®" and others) inhibits the secretion of the acid. It is very effective but also costly. Sometimes only a short 14 day course is required and then the horse can be managed with other changes. Some horses require ongoing treatment, tapered to the lowest effective dose.

Sucralfate can also be used. This product sticks to the ulcer to protect it against acid. It is more commonly used in foals. This and several other products are only effective if given on an empty stomach, making them less useful as food deprivation is contra-indicated in EGUS!

PREVENTION

Preventing development of ulcers revolves around avoiding triggering factors. Feed little and often (ideally 4-6 meals a day if not on pasture) and at least 75% of the diet should be roughage. Avoid periods of time with nothing to eat, prolonged confinement, and be aware of the signs of ulcers, particularly in horses that are exposed to the factors discussed previously.

If you notice any of the clinical signs listed above, please contact your Totally Vets vet as soon as possible so that we can act quickly. For more information on EGUS, please don't hesitate to ring either branch.

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CERTIFIED MIXED PULP



WOOD FIBRE FROM SUSTAINABLE FOREST



CHLORINE FREE



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ARCHIVAL





The results are in and Margaret finished 5th in the Two Day Individual Open Women with a time of 14:54:16!

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations also goes out to our equine vet Lucy Cahill on her recent engagement to local farmer Daniel Russell.

You might be lucky enough to see the new rock on her finger. All the best for a happy future together!

THE NATIONAL YEARLING SALES

The National Yearling Sales are over for another year. 1444 horses were presented this year. With 75% of these horses selling, the average price was \$78,512. Our local studs recorded some good sales figures. Congratulations to Fairdale Stud on the impressive sale of their Zabeel filly, out of Howmuchyacharging, for \$380,000.



Marg in her kayak



Rex and William Fell of Goodwood Stud at the Karaka Yearling Sales 2012

Sarah Ebbett Photography

Poor hoof quality in horses

Joao Dib

Poor hoof quality is likely to be the first thing that is noticed when examining a horse. Good-quality hoof horn is dry, hard and tough. It should not be brittle, soft and spongy. Nutrition, poor environment, drugs and trauma are some of the things that can affect hoof quality.

The hoof wall consists of an outer and an inner layer. The outer layer should be dense and tough and with a moisture content of 15-20%. In contrast, the inner layer has a moisture content of around 45%. Interlocking sheaves of cells consisting of insensitive (epidermal) and sensitive (dermal) tissue hold the two layers together and blood and lymph provide essential moisture to the dermal tissue. Moisture to the insensitive, dry, hard outer hoof wall is derived by diffusion from this sensitive dermal inner tissue. Optimum blood circulation to the foot is essential for this process.

TOO DRY OR TOO WET CONDITIONS

A hoof that is too dry will be inflexible, have poor shock-absorbing function and it may contract and tighten around sensitive tissues. Cracking and peeling hooves are the result of too much moisture. For example if a horse is kept in muddy conditions, the external hoof wall softens, and pressures from within the hoof capsule causes the foot to flatten and spread out. The mud draws out moisture and oils from the hoof wall. As it dries out, it attempts to bend and warp but it is prevented from doing so by the strong hold that the inner wall has on it and so to release stress, cracks develop. Cracks may become packed with dirt and over time they spread upwards. Excessive moisture also alters the natural varnish-like layer that helps control the moisture content of the hoof capsule.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

NUTRITION

Essential amino acids such as DL-methionine and biotin and other nutrients have been shown to improve horn growth rates and hardness. There are several products on the market that are useful when supplementation is necessary. Generally if nutrition is adequate, poor management and genetics may be the cause of poor-quality hoof wall.



TOPICALS

If the wall is beginning to crack, lanolin, fish oil and combinations can be applied to the hoof wall in order to restore pliability and to stabilize moisture content. We have a number of good products we can recommend.

CONFORMATION

This is a critical aspect to address as a foot must be balanced in order to adequately support all the weight upon it. A well balanced hoof capsule will have a better chance of remaining healthy and will minimise painful conditions of the structures associated with it.

OFFER A DRY AREA

Preventing horses from standing solely on muddy ground will go a long way to prevent excessive outer wall drying and cracking. If you do not have a well drained paddock, consider building up an area of a few square metres by using lime or similar.

If you have any questions about your horse's feet please do not hesitate to contact us at [Totally Vets](http://www.totallyvets.co.nz) for more information.



Small block banter



Facial eczema

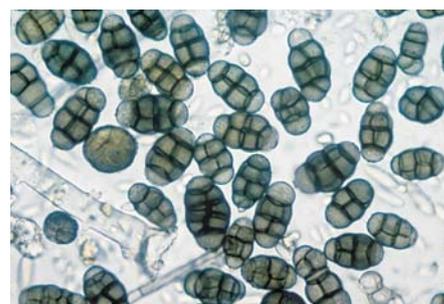
Pithomyces chartarum is a fungus found in many pastures in New Zealand. As a part of its life cycle, it produces spores which contain the chemical compound sporidesmin. This toxic compound causes the disease process known as facial eczema (FE) which affects sheep, cattle, alpacas and goats.

Spores are found in the leaf debris in pastures and are consumed by animals as they graze. Once the spores reach the stomach, they are broken down releasing sporidesmin which is then absorbed across the intestine, enters the blood stream and flows back through to the liver.

The liver is primarily responsible for breaking down unwanted substances in the blood and acting as a centre for detoxification. When sporidesmin reaches the liver, it is subject to reactions by the liver in an effort to break it down. This process however facilitates the release of free radicals; these free radicals then go on to cause liver damage (hepatic necrosis).

As a result, the liver's ability to function normally is impaired, leading to a build-up of normal metabolic and digestive toxins in the blood. Due to the nature of the diet, many of these toxins are photodynamic (react to sunlight). As they pass through blood vessels close to the skin surface, they then react with sunlight and cause damage to the vessels and surrounding tissues, together with further damage in the liver. In severe cases, complete liver failure can result.

Signs of FE can include irritation and restlessness, skin swelling, crusting and oozing (often around the nose and ear margins),



decreased production/growth rates, abortion and death.

Prevention of FE is far more successful than cure. The use of zinc products (available as a capsule delivered into the rumen), application of fungicidal spray to pastures and monitoring of pasture spore counts are the best ways to prevent FE. You can follow the current trends in facial eczema spore counts in the Manawatu on our website www.totallyvets.co.nz.

Please speak to one of Totally Vets' large animal veterinarians for more information.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Steinlager Totally Vets Classic Golf Tournament

Monday 12th March 2012
Hokowhitu Golf Course, Palmerston North

Stacked Mixed Ambrose teams
11am shotgun start.

Totally Vets Fishing Competition

Saturday 21st April 2012

In conjunction with the Wanganui Fishing Club
Launch from the Castlecliff boat ramp at 6am.

\$15 per entry (*conditions apply*)

Entry fee can be charged to your current Totally Vets account
Contact either clinic for your entry form.