



VET notes

EQUINE & LIFESTYLE

DECEMBER 10



Meet your vet... Anita Renes

Anita has worked with us at Totally Vets for nearly 4 years - since graduating from Massey University. She is involved in all areas of large animal work with special interests in dairy lameness and mastitis.

Anita grew up in Pleasant Point in South Canterbury and now lives on a dairy farm in Apiti with her husband Arno, cat Smooch, horse Buddie and pet sheep Lulu and Sweetie.

She plays as hard as she works, filling in the down time with netball, bike rides, runs - recently completing a half marathon here in Palmy, and is a member of toastmasters.

As she is leaving your place it may pay to check to see if she has closed her tailgate as she has been known to use her truck to carry feed to her horse and then travel from Apiti to Palmy without shutting the tailgate - thankfully nothing fell out!

Sunburn!

Lucy Cahill

After the stunning sunny days we have been treated to so far this November, it is important to remember to slip, slop, slap. Yourself and your horse!

Horses and ponies with pink noses are at a high risk of sunburn caused by UVA and UVB radiation. As well as being very painful and unsightly, UV rays cause damage and breakdown of the cells in the skin. There are other things that can look a lot like sunburn such as rain scald and photosensitivities. The latter can have a more serious underlying cause and should be investigated by a veterinarian.

There are two main options to protect your horse from becoming sun burnt. The first is using a

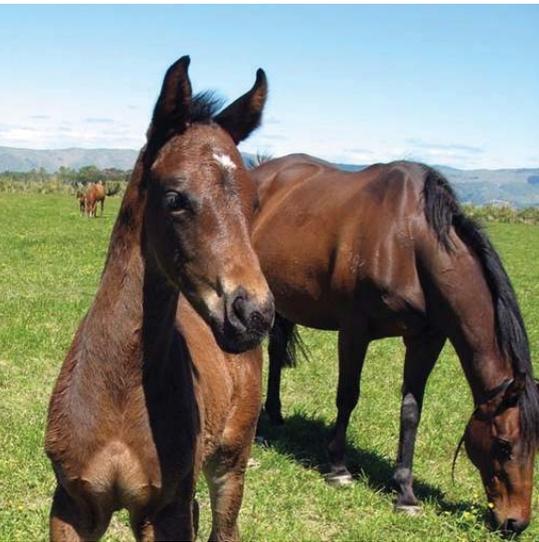
nose flap attached to a halter. These are generally well tolerated but can lead to halter rub, necessitating removal for part or all of the day.

The other option is to use a sunscreen. It is recommended that you use an animal-specific product rather than a human sunblock. The formulation of the human products requires more frequent application which is sometimes not feasible. Animal sunscreen such as FiltaBac® or FiltaClear® don't absorb UV radiation like human products, they reflect it, meaning as long as a visible film remains on the area it will be effective.

FiltaBac® is the original white product, while FiltaClear® looks white but goes on clear, making it perfect for show days.

If you would like to speak to one of our veterinarians about sunburn in horses, or to enquire about FiltaBac® or FiltaClear® please phone or drop in to either of our clinics.





From the horse's mouth Lucy Cahill

October was marked by the much anticipated arrival of Kit. The High Chaparral filly is out of Beaver Creek and belongs to Melinda, who many of you will have met as she has spent the last 3 years with TVL as Barry's technician during the stud season.

Melinda is very relieved to have another happy healthy foal on the ground and would like to thank Duncan Fell and the team at Fairdale Stud for their excellent care of Beaver and Kit.

Staying with the studs, the breeding season is in full swing with some lovely foals on the ground. After a flying start to the season with the dry mares, a combination of wet weather and mares

Poor Performance

Margaret Leyland

There are a number of reasons why your horse may not be performing up to expectations. The first thing to decide is whether your expectations are realistic. Has the horse performed to a high standard previously? Has sufficient training been given? Is the horse fit enough? If you've ruled out unrealistic expectations, then some of the most common problems are listed below:

1. LAMENESS

Although lameness is often obvious, certain types of lameness can be difficult to detect. If a horse is equally lame in both front legs, it will have a potterly, short-striding gait, but it may be hard to pick which leg is sore. Subtle hindlimb lamenesses can also be difficult to recognise and may first present as a decline in performance.

2. RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS

Problems in the respiratory system may present with abnormal noises during work. Roaring, whistling or gurgling noises may indicate obstructions to the upper respiratory tract (URT). These can easily be investigated by endoscopy, although in some cases treadmill endoscopy at Massey may be required to see a problem that only occurs during exercise.

Horses that are easily tired or slow to recover after exercise, despite adequate fitness, may have problems in the lower respiratory tract, i.e. within the lungs. Possible causes are Recurrent Airway Obstruction (RAO, aka "heaves") or Inflammatory Airway Disease (IAD). These conditions are further investigated by taking samples of fluid from the trachea (windpipe) or from inside the lungs. These procedures can be done at the same time as URT endoscopy, so a full assessment of the whole respiratory tract is possible at the same time.

3. HEART PROBLEMS

Heart problems are uncommon, but can be a cause of poor performance. Listening to the heart with a stethoscope at rest and straight after exercise can tell us a lot, and further investigation may involve an ECG to measure the electrical activity of the heart, and/or an

ultrasound scan to visualise the structures of the heart.

4. GASTRIC ULCERS

Horses fed high concentrate diets are at risk of developing stomach ulcers. The risk increases with travel and stress, so racehorses and competition horses are particularly susceptible. Stomach ulcers can be diagnosed by gastro-endoscopy or a trial treatment period can be used for diagnosis. Management changes can also be beneficial.

5. RYEGRASS STAGGERS

During the late summer and autumn, fungal spores growing on ryegrass may cause vestibular disease, which causes dizziness. Severe ryegrass staggers is quite easy to recognise, but in some cases subclinical disease may be present and cause poor performance without obvious signs. There is a blood test for one of the toxins, Lolitrem B, but a negative test can't rule it out because other toxins are also implicated. Subtle signs of vestibular disease may be present, and can help to confirm a diagnosis.

Please give us a call if you are worried that your horse is not performing up to scratch, and we will be happy to investigate the problem.





tending to go overdue before foaling meant a slower return to cycling, affecting mating for several weeks in early-October. However we are on the up again and praying that the lovely weather continues from now on!

Those of us in the sport-horse game are in the middle of a busy spring season. Most of our local A&P's will be done by the time you receive this newsletter and the push to Horse Of The Year will be on. All the best for the second half of the season, we look forward to seeing you out competing and hearing about your successes.

The warmer weather heralds the arrival of Ryegrass Staggers caused by a fungal -produced toxin, causing signs from nervous/spooky behaviour to hyper-sensitivity, staggering and falling. Prevention is by avoidance of affected pasture and hay made off the area during high risk times. There are products available and can be fed that may minimise toxin absorption. Please speak to your veterinarian before commencing the use of these products, as some are more effective than others.



Equine castration

Why castrate?

Colts are generally castrated for ease of management. If a colt is left entire it is usually impractical to run him with mares, geldings or other stallions, especially as he matures. They can become difficult to handle or even dangerous. Colts are sometimes castrated because of conformational problems. Less common reasons to castrate include: retained testicles (cryptorchids), scrotal hernias or testicular tumours.

Horses castrated as foals tend to recover quicker while stallions castrated after maturity may take longer to recover and be more prone to some complications.

Horses to be castrated should be in good general health and have their tetanus vaccinations up to date. If there is any doubt regarding their tetanus vaccination history they

will require a tetanus anti-toxin (see our article on vaccination at www.totallyvets.co.nz).

Most horses are now castrated "down". This means a full general anaesthetic is given and the surgery is performed while the horse is lying down. Quiet, well handled horses can be castrated while standing, using local anaesthetic and heavy sedation. Either way a clean dry area is required in which to castrate the horse, fine weather makes this more achievable.

Castration can be further divided into "open" or "closed" castration, referring to whether or not a final layer of tissue over the testicle is cut or left intact.

In the field open castration is used, the incisions are left open to drain.

Closed castrations require a longer anaesthetic and sterile conditions as the incisions are closed after surgery. This increases the cost considerably, but reduces the risk of complications such as haemorrhage, infection or herniation.

Immediately following surgery, turn the horse into a small, clean grassy paddock. For the first 24 hours following castration, keep the horse in this restricted area to reduce the likelihood of bleeding (due to blood clots dislodging). After 24 hours he can be moved into a larger paddock. The horse will need to be separated from mares for a further 3 weeks post castration.

The first complication that may result from castration is excessive bleeding. The wounds may drip blood for 24-48 hours after the surgery. If individual drops cannot be counted, the vet needs to be called immediately. This may occur in the first 24 hours post-operatively even after appearing to be under control.

Evisceration may occur, where a piece of fat (omentum) that lines the gut, or more seriously a loop of bowel, may become exposed through the incisions. This is very serious and requires a vet immediately. The bowel must be kept off the ground, e.g. in a clean sheet wrapped around the horses belly until the vet arrives. Evisceration can occur anytime in the first 48 hours following castration.

Swelling will normally be maximal at approximately 3-5 days after the surgery. Encourage the horse to exercise e.g. lunging, hand walking, gentle exercise or turning him into a paddock with company where he will move about. If you notice that he is standing around then he will need to be forcibly exercised to help prevent excessive swelling.

Infection may develop after 5-7 days. The horse may have swelling and discharge around the incisions or be lethargic and not eating. The vet should be contacted as the incisions will need to be reopened to drain and antibiotics and anti-inflammatories may be needed.

If you have any concerns, or would like to book one of our dedicated equine vets to castrate your horse please do not hesitate to call Totally Vets.

Small block banter



Summer sheep problems

Anita Renes

Flystrike season is upon us. Flystrike occurs when blowflies lay their eggs on sheep. The eggs hatch into maggots which feed on the sheep's skin, causing nasty wounds and eventually leading to severe infection, fluid loss and death. Now is a good time to shear your sheep, or at least crutch them. Dags attract flies and increase the risk of fly strike. Good worm control will also reduce the amount of dags on sheep. Control footrot as flies will be attracted to smelly feet. Avoid having dung piles or composting vegetation nearby and consider applying a preventative dip to sheep. Dips are chemicals applied to the sheep to control and prevent flystrike. Sheep affected

by flystrike need immediate treatment. Contact your vet to learn more about this.

Summer is also the time of year when pinkeye becomes more prevalent in sheep. Pinkeye is an infection of the eye caused by a species of *Chlamydia*. The bacteria is often spread by dust, pollen in grass and flies that have been contaminated by the tears of infected sheep. Affected sheep will have tear staining on their face, the eye will be reddened and the surface of the eye may become cloudy. The sheep is temporarily blind and in severe cases ulcers can develop and lead to rupture of the eyeball. Most sheep affected by pinkeye will recover on their own. However, it is usually a good idea to treat, especially if you only have a small flock, as this will speed up recovery and reduce the likelihood of ulceration. Antibiotics are applied directly to the eye in either a powder, spray or ointment form. Talk to your vet about treatment options.

Barbers pole worm (*Haemonchus*) is a blood-sucking parasite that can quickly kill both young and adult sheep. The worm is more common over the summer and autumn months and typically we will see outbreaks after the first rain following a hot, dry spell. Affected sheep will be lethargic, sit down when being moved, pant and have very pale or white gums. Scouring is not normally seen with this particular parasite like it is with other worms. Prevention and treatment is based on strategic drenching at this time of the year. A drench with persistent activity against Barbers Pole needs to be used. Your vet will advise you of the most appropriate choice.

Your veterinarian can design an animal health plan specifically for your lifestyle block. This plan will ensure animals are fed and managed optimally and that drenches, vaccines, dips and other treatments are given at the best time to prevent disease.

Teeth can be a pain in the mouth! But equine dentistry doesn't have to be!

Dental pain may cause your horse to:

- drop its feed
- lose weight
- shake its head while being ridden
- be reluctant to turn
- be difficult to ride

A calm, stress-free, safe and efficient dental may be all you need to correct these problems

Totally Vets provides full equine dental services

- sedation and pain relief as required
- removal of sharp points, hooks and ramps
- extraction
- radiography if required

Speak to us today for further information and to book an appointment

