



# VET notes

EQUINE & LIFESTYLE

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## Mud fever - Dermatophylosis

**Katie McKinlay**

Dermatophylosis is a major winter hazard for horses. It is an infectious disease caused by bacteria that are harboured within the scabs on the skin of infected horses and/or in the soil. The name "mud fever" has been adopted due to the fact that it is during prolonged periods of rain that the disease is most often seen. This is primarily because water has a softening effect on the skin that consequently is not as effective as a "mechanical" barrier to infection, allowing the bacteria (*Dermatophilus congolensis*) to invade the skin.

"Mud fever" occurs on the limbs, most commonly around the coronet, pastern and fetlock, and most often on the white haired pink skinned areas. Once established, mud fever lesions can extend further up the limbs.

Lesions begin as weepy sores, and develop scabs under which the bacteria live. In severe cases areas may become swollen, pussy and bleed. The affected area is often very painful and the horse may even become lame.

In addition to wet muddy conditions, some horses are predisposed, including those with heavy feathers around the legs. Horses with a concurrent illness may be more prone to developing this and other conditions.

Diagnosis is generally based on clinical findings, but if required, scabs can be examined under a microscope, or the area swabbed and cultured to rule out other bacterial causes.

**Treatment is based around removing the scabs/crusts to expose bacteria to topical treatments and keeping the affected area dry. If you are having trouble clearing up your horse's mud fever please call the clinic to arrange for a veterinarian to visit your horse. The earlier that we can get on top of this condition, the greater the chance of a successful outcome.**

## New extended hours

Totally Vets would like to inform you that we can now offer you routine equine visits until 6pm every Tuesday and Thursday night with Margaret Leyland.

This service is designed to help those of you with work commitments to schedule appointments after work for: vaccinations; health checks; dentals; and some other routine vet work.

**Please phone our Palmerston North clinic in advance if you would like to take advantage of these call times.**





Fairdale Stud's new stallion Nom Du Jeu

## From the horse's mouth Lucy Cahill

With the arrival of two new Thoroughbred stallions in the area, there's more choice than ever as to where you send your broodmare this season.

Fairdale's new stallion Nom Du Jeu was mentioned here several months ago. He joins Fully Fledged at the stud this season with

Howbaddouwantit locating to Goodwood to stand along with Chinese Dragon. Wellfield Lodge's new stallion, Road To Rock joins Handsome Ransom and Alamosa to give this stud a strong band of stallions.

With the show season just underway now is the time to ensure that your horses are fully vaccinated, to minimise the risk of disease transmission at events, where horses are

## Artificial insemination for your mare

Anitia Rénes

Where permissible and transported semen is available, Artificial Insemination (AI) should be considered for breeding mares because of the many advantages it offers.

Your mare does not have to be sent away to stud to be mated (particularly appealing if she has a foal at foot), and the risk of exposure to infectious disease that can occur when horses

are brought together on studs is eliminated. Overseas stallions, or stallions in areas that it would be difficult to get your mare to, can be used. The chances of injuries during mating are greatly reduced and AI is also a cleaner process than natural service, and can be beneficial in some 'problem' mares.

Your vet will advise you on the best time to have your mare scanned to begin the AI process. Initially the mare will be given a full reproductive examination. The reproductive organs are checked and her cycle stage determined, allowing estimation of the likely time of ovulation. This allows semen to be ordered and insemination to occur at the optimum time. Once inseminated, the mare is rescanned to check for ovulation. Scans are then carried out at 16-18 days, 28 days and 42 days to confirm pregnancy. The reasons

for scanning at these times are: to confirm pregnancy; check for twinning; and to monitor for early pregnancy loss, ensuring that re-breeding (if necessary) is not delayed.

The collection, preparation, transport and storage of semen is the responsibility of the stud that manages the stallion. Fresh, chilled or frozen semen will be used, depending on how quickly it can be transported to the mare. The method of collection, storage technique and individual stallion effect will determine the viability of the semen produced. Stallions vary in their fertility after different storage techniques. The stud can usually provide you with information on the fertility of the stallion.

**Totally Vets offers an in-clinic equine artificial insemination service. Contact the Palmerston North branch for more information.**



## Meet your vet... Barry Drayton

Paul Wiseman

Barry Drayton cut his teeth as a young vet in Hawera and found his way around horses under the

mentorship of great Taranaki horse trainers such as Brian Deacon, Wally McEwan, and Herb Bergesson.

Barry and Hazel moved closer to family in Manawatu where Barry worked initially in Feilding and then with local identities Jim Kelly and Sam Burgess in Palmerston North. The well recognised registered KB horse brand is still used today! Totally Vets, of which Barry is a shareholder and director, evolved in part and through various name changes and mergers from this original Kelly Burgess practice.

Barry and Hazel were drawn into the local pony club and sport horse fraternity by their daughters, Kylie and Carla. Both of whom participated in their chosen sport striving for

excellence at a level Barry would set for himself. Hazel was a long time stalwart of the Linton Country School and devoted several years to the schools' administration. Nowadays it's Kylie's and Carla's children who keep Barry and Hazel busy and entertained during their leisure time.

Between time in the Taranaki and Manawatu Barry subjected himself to a post graduate study of the equine limb and earned a Diploma in Equine Orthopaedic Surgery and Radiography. From this time Barry has continually developed his capabilities in the diagnosis and management of lameness in horses to the high standards he sets today.

**There is many a horse that's benefitted from Bazza's meticulous and well honed surgical skills. Observing Barry's surgical expertise just doesn't compute with his performance as flanker for the Varsity "V's".**



in close proximity. Please refer to our website [www.totallyvets.co.nz](http://www.totallyvets.co.nz) for details on vaccination protocols, or call either of our clinics where one of our vets will be happy to help you decide what's best for you.

If you haven't already had your horse's teeth done during the winter months, it is worth having one of our vets perform a dental examination now. This will help ensure everything is in top shape before the season is in full swing. We offer a full dental service using power dental equipment for an effective, accurate and efficient job. Please refer to

our website for more information on equine dentistry.

Totally Vets ran a successful seminar for our equine clients in August covering dentistry, parasite management and drenches, and trace elements, with a chance to chat with our team of equine vets over a glass of wine. We hope to run these on an annual basis, covering a variety of current equine health issues. If you would like to be advised of future seminars please phone Hayley at the Feilding clinic, or Selena in Palmerston North.



Wellfield Stud's new stallion Road to Rock

# Equine Metabolic Syndrome

Lucy Cahill

**Does your pony (or horse) have an abnormally cresty neck? Is he more difficult than most to keep trim, or prone to developing laminitis or grass founder?**

If this sounds like your equine companion, it may be worth considering whether he is suffering from Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS). This condition most commonly affects middle-aged to older horses which are over-weight or obese. Ponies and breeds evolved for tough conditions are most often affected, although any breed or age, in any body condition, can develop EMS. Many questions remain about this emerging syndrome.

EMS results when the horse becomes "insulin resistant". Insulin is a hormone responsible for regulating the blood sugar (glucose) levels within the body, by promoting energy storage

as fat, and in the liver and muscle. Horses with EMS become resistant to insulin (the glucose uptake into fat, muscle and liver become less sensitive). More insulin is produced by the pancreas in an effort to return the blood glucose levels (BGL) to normal. Eventually even the high insulin levels can't control BGL, resulting in high insulin and high BG. This leads to the abnormal fat deposits, often seen at the crest of the neck, over the shoulder, around the tail head, or above the eyes.

EMS can lead to recurrent laminitis or founder. This is thought to be a result of the persistently high BGL. Laminitic bouts may be very mild to begin with, and the onset of signs is often insidious. Lameness due to laminitis is often the first sign that owners seek advice for. Refer to our website [www.totallyvets.co.nz](http://www.totallyvets.co.nz) for more information on laminitis.

Diagnosis of EMS is difficult. There are blood tests available that can be useful, although thorough clinical examination can often provide the best clues as to what may be going on. Cushing's Syndrome (usually caused by a tumour of the Pituitary gland, also leading to hormonal imbalance) can also cause similar signs and should be considered in suspected cases of EMS.

Although there is no specific treatment for EMS, these horses can be successfully managed if they are diagnosed early. This means carefully controlling diet and exercise. Affected horses generally require limited, or no, access to grass or pasture. Instead aim to feed meadow-hay. Soaking for an hour in cold water will further decrease the sugar content of hay if necessary. High sugar concentrate feeds containing grain such as oats, barley and maize should be eliminated from the diet, as should molasses. Generally hard feed is not needed to maintain a healthy weight in these horses, but if it is necessary stick to low GI alternatives.

As these horses often have painful feet due to laminitis, it is necessary to treat this before exercise can be increased. Once comfortable enough to do so, regularly exercising your horse will help control progression of signs. Start quietly, and aim to build up to daily exercise in the form of walking, riding, lungeing etc. Be guided by your horse's level of comfort and body condition as to how much exercise is necessary and reassess often.

**If you are concerned that your horse or pony may be suffering from EMS please do not hesitate to phone either of our clinics. One of our vets will be happy to help put in place the best plan for you and your horse.**



## Lambing time

Greta Baynes

It is the time of year when lambs are due. Ewes ready to lamb will have full udders, be floppy under the tail and will separate themselves from the mob. The waterbag appears first, followed by the lamb within about half an hour.

You will need to help if:

- the waterbag has burst and the ewe has not progressed in the last hour
- she is straining without making any progress
- only a head/leg(s)/tail is sticking out

If you help, use disinfectant and plenty of lubricant, manipulating the lamb so it comes out in a normal presentation. Once you have gently pulled the lamb out, check for another. The ewe will need a dose of antibiotic to prevent infection. Call us immediately if you are concerned.

If you choose to raise a lamb, it requires colostrum (ewe's first milk) within the first twelve hours of life. Ewe colostrum is best and can be frozen for later use, alternatives are cow or goat colostrum (fresh is better than frozen). Do not microwave it - it destroys the goodies that provide protection to the lamb.

After 24-96 hours of colostrum (100-200mL/feed) begin feeding a lamb milk replacer. Maintain the volume, but over several days reduce the amount of colostrum and increase the amount of replacer. The

guidelines for mixing milk replacer are outlined on the bags, but in general feed 100-200mL, 4-6 times/day for four days. Increase this gradually to 400-600mL twice a day for the next three to six weeks.

We have found that pet lambs are often affected by a bug that causes bloat in the fourth stomach (abomasum). Affected lambs often die. To prevent this, consider using a yoghurtised milk. The 'good' bugs in yoghurt compete with the 'bad' bug *Sarcinia*, reducing the chances of bloat. Instructions for the yoghurt-milk recipe are available from our clinics.

**Lambing can be quite stressful for the ewe and you! If you are at all worried, please do not hesitate to call us.**

**More detailed notes are available on our website.**

## Sheep Measles

Lucy Cahill

So called because of the appearance of sheep meat infected with the cysts, sheep measles is an issue for international market access for NZ lamb. Although there are no adverse affects to human health, the presence of cysts in

meat is considered undesirable. Management is just as important on lifestyle blocks as on big farms!

Sheep measles is caused by a tape worm (*Cysticercus ovis*) of dogs. Eggs passed out in the dogs faeces onto pasture are ingested by sheep, resulting in development of cysts causing visible blemishes in the sheep's muscle. Dogs become infected by eating the cysts in meat.

Management of sheep measles means cooking or freezing sheep meat fed to dogs, and regularly treating dogs with an effective wormer. Treat once a month for the tape worm in question as follows:

- Month 1: Drontal® Wormer**
- Month 2: Wormicide Tape®**
- Month 3: Wormicide Tape®**
- Month 4: Drontal®...**

**Please refer to [www.totallyvets.co.nz](http://www.totallyvets.co.nz) for information treating meat fed to dogs, and more details on sheep measles.**

