

Equine News: July 2021

Buying a horse or pony

This month we offer a top 10 of tips for buying a healthy new horse or pony:

1. Have a pre-purchase examination (vetting) done before purchase and ensure you make it clear when placing a deposit that purchase is subject to a pre-purchase examination.
2. Ensure you organise the vetting yourself with a vet who is not the vet for the horse's owner. Speak to the vet before the examination to discuss your needs and level of experience. The person selling the horse should not arrange a vetting for you.
3. Do not accept a previous pre-purchase examination certificate presented to you. It is essential the horse is viewed by a vet just prior to purchase and is judged according to you as an individual purchaser and the purpose you require the horse for. When speaking to the vet be clear on the purpose you need the horse for, your experience and concerns.
4. Ask all the questions – has the horse ever been lame? or had time out of work?, behavioural problems? – do not assume the seller will volunteer the information.
5. Do your homework- Check websites etc. for the horse's competition results. Has the horse recently had a year out of competition? If so, why?
6. Do your sums on costs – As most horse owners will tell you buying the horse is just the first step; don't forget about livery, feed, farrier, worming, vets, insurance etc.
7. We would always recommend you personally go to view a horse together with a knowledgeable friend if you are inexperienced. You must always try the horse under saddle. An experienced seller can make riding the horse look easy and cover up gait abnormalities.
8. Ensure the horse's temperament and experience level are suitable for you as an owner and rider.
9. Be prepared to walk away if things don't feel right or you are being put under pressure to make a decision or pay a deposit.
10. Finally, and most importantly - Do you like the horse? For any equestrian success, at any level, the teamwork between horse and rider is of paramount importance.

Buying a horse can be a significant investment and a daunting thought! Please call and speak to one of our vets if you are considering a purchase and need some guidance on pre-purchase examinations (vettings).

Tintin steps into Godmother role

Zoe and Tintin are two experienced brood mares belonging to Louise, an equally experienced owner. The mares had been together for a few years and Zoe has always been the "better mother", and Tintin had reluctantly just done what was needed of her.

This year's foal was possibly going to be Zoe's last foal, and a difficult birth needing some veterinary assistance, confirmed the decision. She would rear this foal then retire happily, resting on her laurels after her time as a very successful brood mare.

Zoe foaled "Louie" mid April and Tintin, just 3 weeks later foaled "Muppet". Both mums and both fillies were doing very well.

When "Louie" was 8 weeks old, Zoe had an episode of colic. Sadly, this was not a simple medical colic and deterioration was rapid. There was displacement of large bowel, obstructed intestine and compromise to blood flow. The toxins and bacteria normally held within the gut, were now poisoning Zoe.

The most awful decision had to be made, and Zoe was euthanased on humane grounds.

At 8 weeks of age, "Louie" was old enough to cope without large amounts of milk from her mother. She was fed a diet of milk, stud balancer and foal creep pellets. Tintin surprised everyone by stepping up to help out her late friend and taking on a godmother role to Louie. After an initial period of slight weight loss, "Louie" soon began to regain weight, grow and thrive.



"Louie" now lives alongside Tintin and "Muppet". Tintin won't allow "Louie" to feed from her, but will happily 'mother' her in other ways.

Sometimes, from a tragic, sad situation, horses can surprise us and bring a happy outcome.

We were all delighted to meet the happy threesome when they came to visit us at the surgery recently.



Sacro-iliac Injury

Sacro-iliac disease is possibly more common than we realise as many horses can have pain in the area secondary to other causes of hind limb lameness.

The sacro-iliac joints (one on either side) form part of the pelvis and sit just under the highest part of the back behind the saddle. It is the area where the hindlimbs transfer impulsive power to the rest of the body, so the forces acting on the area are immense. We think that there are many different disease processes that can affect the area and most horses show signs when ridden, both flat and over jumps.

The area can be imaged with an ultrasound scanner, owing to the large mass of muscle and bones in this area, x-rays are not possible in most cases.

Owner Sophie tells us Duffy's story:

"Although I felt relieved that it wasn't something more serious, I was really devastated when I found out about Duffy's injury. I had owned him less than a year at the time and was geared up and excited for my first competition season with my new partner who had already proven over the winter months to be a promising young horse.

I soon learned there wouldn't be a quick fix to his problem and that it would take a minimum of 4-5 months to get him back to full fitness in addition to future management. I worked hard to keep focussed and not lose motivation with him. The amount of help and support I have received from all at Scott Mitchell, but in particular my amazing vet Charlotte and physio Kirsten has been outstanding! I have really felt they were there to get in touch with at any point if I had any worries or concerns.

Duffy initially required weekly physio sessions and checks to ensure he was continuing to make good progress. Kirsten has been so brilliantly helpful providing me with a structured rehab programme to work with, each week adding a bit more on the previous which gave me a way of keeping track of his progress.

I'm so glad I took the time to complete all the exercises and am delighted with the horse he has now become. This experience has provided a textbook example of how important it is to incorporate all types of work to build greater all round strength in a horse; from the basic groundwork, to in-hand polework, to lunging, to your hacking and hillwork and finally ridden arena and pole work and finally not forgetting the carrot stretches. I am delighted to be out competing again with Duffy feeling and looking great!"

Duffy following his initial injury:



Duffy following his rehabilitation programme:



After all Sophie's hard work Duffy is out competing and looking fantastic. Well done to the whole team!

Zone Visits July and August

Zone 1 (NE44, NE46-47, NE49 & DH8) - Mon 5th July, Mon 2nd Aug

Zone 2 (NE19, NE45 & NE48) - Mon 12th July, Mon 9th Aug

Zone 3 (NE1-7, NE12-15, NE18, NE20, NE22-30 & NE61) - Sally -Thurs 1st July, Thurs 4th Aug
Liz/Steph Mon 19th July, Mon 16th Aug

Zone 4 (NE8-11, NE16-17, NE21, NE31-43) - Mon 26th July, Mon 23rd Aug

Zone 5 (DH2-7, DH9 & DL13-16) - Tues 27th July, Tues 24th Aug

Zone visits offer a reduced price visit of £20 for one owner and £10 for more than one owner at same yard for planned routine veterinary work.

We are able to offer this service by mapping the most efficient route around the calls – therefore it is not possible to specify a time or vet for a zone visit.