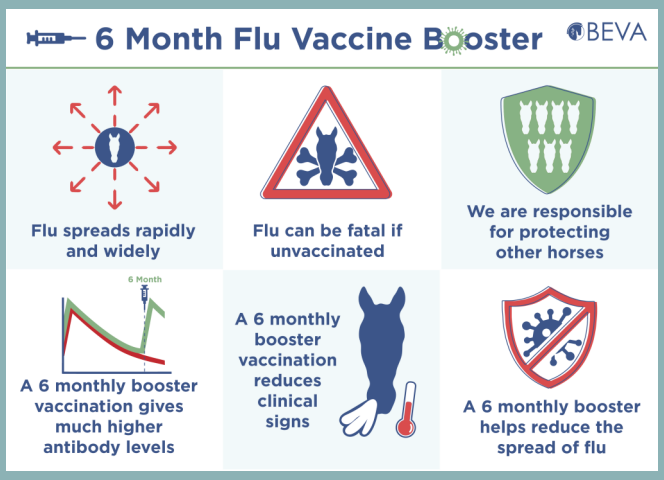
Equine News: June 2026

Equine influenza Warning

Case numbers continue to rise and identified cases both locally and at Appleby Horse Fair is a worrying reminder of the situation in 2019 when we saw case numbers soar following the summer mixing at competitions and resulted in cancelled events.

It is important we act now to prevent the spread of flu. The majority of cases continue to be seen in unvaccinated and recently bought in horses.

The best way to protect your horse is to ensure their vaccinations are up to date. If your horse has not had a booster in the last 6 months we recommend bringing their vaccination forward to maximise their protection over the coming months.



Signs included a raised temperature, a harsh dry cough, a watery nasal discharge, depression and a loss of appetite. Foals with flu often develop pneumonia and in many cases it can be fatal.

Infected horses will spread the virus through coughing and typically shed the virus for up to 10 days. The spread can be airborne up to 2 miles. Flu is highly infectious with a rapid spread between horses due to the short incubation period.

Ensure biosecurity arrangements are in place with the quarantine arrangements for new horses away from the main yard and vaccination requirements prior to entry into the yard. Prevent contact with other horses at competitions or sharing transport

If your horse develops a cough please isolate them and inform the yard owner who must prevent movements on and off the yard. Arrange a veterinary visit as soon as possible for examination and testing of your horse.

Sweet like chocolate!

Like managing type 2 diabetes in people, when we are managing our horses' weight and laminitis risk we need to consider both calories and carbohydrate (sugar and starch) levels.

Photosynthesis uses energy from sunlight to convert carbon dioxide to sugars and oxygen. The plant uses these sugars for growth so during the night sugar levels drop as the plant uses up the sugar for growth.

Factors that increase carbohydrate in pasture:

- increased photosynthesis on bright sunny days leads to sugar accumulation throughout the day.
- Cold night-time temperatures—growth stops at temperatures below 5C so the sugars aren't used up and accumulate. Sunny days and cold nights are the formula for particularly high sugar in grass.
- Stressed pasture : overgrazed or inadequate water or nutrients for plant growth
- Short grass or recently cut pasture as sugar is stored at the base of the plant.
- Seed heads present containing starch.

Increased growth and longer grass have lower carbohydrate levels but this increases the amount of grass available so we find ourselves between a rock and hard place!

We can use strip grazing with a back fence, grazing muzzles to reduce bite depth and time turn out to when sugar levels are lowest -11pm to 6am!!

The future of laminitis prevention

We are really excited to have been in discussion recently with Anfitest who are developing a handheld device and app for owners to regularly test sugar levels in grass and forage. The app will use data from pasture sugar levels, weather, body condition and insulin test results to give laminitis risk advice specific to your fields. This could be a game changing tool in the prevention of laminitis.

Please help the development of this vital tool by filling in the following survey:

https://bit.ly/4sUcCcF

The Secret of Suck-cess!

It's that time of year when the equine team are busy with foals being born and with breeding services for brood mares to make next year's batch of foals.

As most breeders are well aware, getting a foal up and sucking the mare's colostrum (containing antibodies for the foals immune system) as soon as possible after birth is key to a healthy foal.

Some foals (often called dummy foals) are born in a semi-conscious state and without the normal suck and search reflexes to help them to drink soon after birth. Recent thinking is that these foals may not have adequately woken from the unconscious state in the womb. A technique of using a rope to squeeze the foal's body can help simulate the birth process and in some cases help stimulate the suck reflex. A simple and remarkable technique that can change some foals almost instantly.

Blood test taken at 24-48 hours can indicate the foal's antibody levels and indicate if additional anitibodies might be considered via the use of intravenous hyperimmune plasma transfusion.

Zone visits June and July

Zone 1A (CA8, NE46-47, NE49) Zone 1B (NE44, DH8) - Mon 1st June, Mon 6th July

Zone 2 (NE19, NE45 & NE48) - Mon 8th June, Mon 13th July

Zone 3 (NE1-7, NE12-15, NE18, NE20, NE22-30 & NE61) - usually Sally - Thurs 4th June, Thurs 2nd July usually Liz—Mon 15th June, Mon 20th July

Zone 4 (NE8-11, NE16-17, NE21, NE31-43- Mon 22nd June, Mon 27th July

Zone 5 (DH1-7, DH9) - Tues 16th June, Tues 21st July

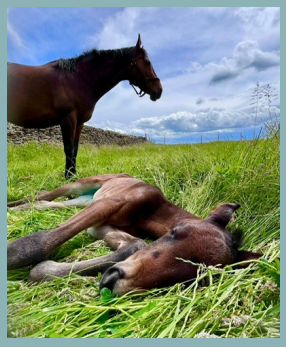
Zone 6 (DL 12-16) - Tues 23rd June, Tues 28th July

Zone visits offer a reduced price visit of £24 for one owner and £12 for more than one owner at same yard for planned routine veterinary work.

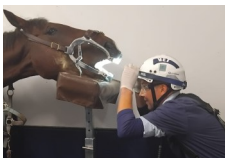
We are able to offer this service by mapping the most efficient route around the calls – therefore it is not possible to specify a time or vet for a zone visit. Appointments must be booked by 1pm on the Friday before visit.

It's Foal time!

We love seeing your photos of all the gorgeous new arrivals at this time of year. Nothing beats a happy new foal check!



Next Dental Clinic: Wed 18th June



Dental clinics are held monthly at the surgery, usually with Euan who holds a certificate in Advanced Practice focussed on equine dentistry. The dental clinic allows us to work more efficiently and so we are able to pass on that saving to you with reduced price routine dentistry.

Dental clinic routine dental inc. sedation £78 inc. VAT

Dental clinic dental plus diastema flush and sedation £100 inc. VAT

Terms and conditions: Payment must be made at the time of treatment. Please arrive at your allocated time and collect your horse promptly after treatment.

Scott Mitchell Veterinary Care Ltd.
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29 High Street, Tow Law, DL13 4DH **01388 731911**
www.smvc.co.uk