

Equine News: May 2021

Handling Hormones— your questions:

My mare is often bad tempered—could it be her hormones?

Mares naturally cycle best in the late spring with long daylight, warmth, grass and exposure to stallions all promoting the onset of regular cycling following the winter when many mares stop cycling or cycles are longer and less regular.

During the Spring and summer most mares will come into season every 21 days. Some mares may have 'silent' cycles with owners unaware of any hormonal changes. Other mares may be more restless, urinate more frequently and hold the tail up and display the clitoris. A season normally lasts for 3-5 days. Some mares may perform less well at competitions and can be more difficult to ride and handle in this period.

If this challenging behaviour occurs regularly every 3 weeks and lasts for 3-5 days then it is likely to be related to the hormonal changes associated with follicular growth and ovulation.

Most owners can manage their mare's seasons without too many problems but for a few if they become difficult or dangerous then continuous treatment with an artificial progesterone can be considered to prevent cycling. In extreme cases where the owner is certain that they will not want to breed from a mare the ovaries can be removed by keyhole surgery.



My Gelding is mounting mares in the field—could it be his hormones?

If castration has not been complete and some active testicular tissue remains then this can produce male hormones and lead to stallion-like behaviour; this is known as a "rig". This can be diagnosed with a blood test. Treatment of this uncommon condition involves surgery to locate and remove any remaining testicular tissue.

The majority of geldings who display this type of behaviour are not rigs and there are no male hormones present in their blood stream. These are called "false rigs" and it is caused by a behavioural issue. It is often an act of dominance over another horse, and stallions that have been castrated later in life may be more likely to show this behaviour.

Treatment in these cases must be aimed at changing the social structure or keeping them in all male groups.

Worm Egg Counts: reminder

If you joined our worming or health plans, your first worm egg count is now due:

- It is important to test each horse individually as a number of studies have shown a minority of horses are responsible for the majority of worm eggs excreted on to pasture.
- Worm egg counts can single out these high shedders and they can be individually treated while the rest of the horses with low counts do not receive unnecessary treatment.
- Worm egg counts are recommended to be carried out every 2-3 months between April and September.
- Using the best method for collection of the sample will help improve the accuracy of the results:
- **Collect several small pinches from different areas of the dropping (from minimum of 3 different balls) mix them together and place in a ziplock bag. Expel all the air from bag, seal and label with horses name, age and the date. If not delivering immediately store in the fridge.**



BYWELL SCHOOLING DAY

In aid of Charlotte Straker & S C Association

Bywell, Stocksfield NE43 7AB

Sunday 27th June 2021 ; 9am –5pm

No need to book

Pay on the day £20 per horse and rider

Jumps suitable for all ages and abilities

Refreshments provided

Scott Mitchell Veterinary Care in attendance

Well done Walter!



We are delighted that one of our valued and longstanding clients is progressing so well with her 6yo Connemara gelding Ballywater Village Earl (Walter). He is excelling himself in every discipline and proving to be a good solid all-rounder on the competition scene.



Walter's Story

We got to know Walter after he became lame as a 4yo in June 2019. Lameness examination at the clinic localised the site of lameness to the small hock joints and x-rays revealed a developmental abnormality of his central tarsal bones. As expected in these cases, medication with steroids had little effect and so Walter underwent chemical fusion of his small hock joints.

Fusion (or facilitated ankylosis) of joints can be carried out surgically or through medication of the joint with cartilage destroying substances. In Walter's case, we injected alcohol into the bottom two small hock joints under radiographic guidance. It is a slow process to destroy the cartilage and involves 8-12 months of a work programme to result in fusion. Under Claire's dedicated ownership fusion has been very successful in giving Walter what we hope will be a long and successful career.



X-ray showing needle placement for the injection

Why did Walter's condition occur?

This condition is seen most commonly following premature birth of the foal. The bones of the horse are initially formed of cartilage, which then turns to bone before the foal is born. In premature foals, the small knee and hock bones have not yet fully changed to bone. Cartilage is softer than bone and therefore the cartilage of the hock bones become crushed by the foal standing and moving. This causes lifelong problems with the joints affected and usually shows up as lameness once the horse starts in ridden work. For sport horses we recognise the condition between the ages of 3 and 7 years. The condition can be mitigated by x-raying the knees and hocks of premature foals. If the bones are not fully developed, a special cast can be placed on the foal for its first few weeks of life to bear the weight of the limb whilst the remaining cartilage turns to bone.



Zone Visits May and June

Zone 1 (NE44, NE46-47, NE49 & DH8) - Tues 4th May, Mon 7th June

Zone 2 (NE19, NE45 & NE48) - Mon 10th May, Mon 14th June

Zone 3 (NE1-7, NE12-15, NE18, NE20, NE22-30 & NE61) - Sally -Thurs 6th May, Thurs 3rd June
Liz/Steph Mon 17th May, Mon 21st June

Zone 4 (NE8-11, NE16-17, NE21, NE31-43) - Mon 24th May, Mon 28th June

Zone 5 (DH2-7, DH9 & DL13-16) - Tues 25th May, Tues 29th June

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.

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