



## AUTUMN 2018 NEWSLETTER

**Autumn has just arrived with a wonderful 60-100mm of rain over night!**

However with the very dry conditions we have experienced this summer, there are concerns that horses might start eating toxic weeds in their pastures. We have put a short summary of some of the more common toxic weeds in our area below.

Following on from our highly successful gastric scoping days, HEVC will be holding a few **majorly discounted DENTAL DAYS** along with our **BI-ANNUAL HEALTHY HORSE PACKAGE** during March. We have found that our vets can do a more thorough oral examination and dental care when the horses are brought into the clinic crush

and out of the weather. For this reason we will be giving significant discounts for horses brought into the clinic for their Dentals and healthy horse package **ON WEDNESDAY 21<sup>st</sup> and THURSDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> March**. Faecal egg counts will be done on the day. Ring the clinic to book an appointment and save money.

HEVC will also be hosting a **TALK on NUTRITION @ 6.30pm on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> April**. This night will be sponsored by Pryde Nutrition and Randlab and will feature key note speakers with a wealth of knowledge about **Horse's Nutrition and Gastric ulceration**. Coffee and Sausage sizzle during the break between speakers.

Come along and learn all about what you should be feeding your horses and get answers to all of your questions. Book early by phone or email to make sure you have a place as seats are limited.

**THIS HORSE'S EYE IS ACTUALLY FINE BUT IT IS SUFFERING FROM A SEVERE AND OFTEN FATAL DISEASE- WHAT IS IT?**



**See over for answer →**

**STAFF NEWS -** Many of our clients may have already met Mikayla, our new casual veterinary nurse. Mikayla is completing her cert IV in vet nursing and has been an excellent addition to our already fantastic and caring veterinary nurse team.

### WEEDS & HORSES

Most horses do not eat weeds. However in periods of drought or when weeds are the only things left for the horses to eat (and occasionally when the dried plants get mixed into hay), horses can ingest toxic amounts of these weeds. Weed toxicity can often be put into two groups, liver toxicity or neurological toxicity

Symptoms of liver disease only develop when the organ is no longer able to compensate for the loss of functional tissue. Symptoms usually develop quite suddenly, although in some horses and ponies slight illness can precede more severe symptoms. Early signs include loss of appetite, depression, diarrhoea, weight loss and jaundice. Occasionally acute toxicity can occur with some of these plants and can cause sudden death. The weeds often implicated in liver disease in our area include are pictured below: (from L-R; Fireweed, Green Cestrum, Heliotrope, Paterson's Curse; Ragwort; )

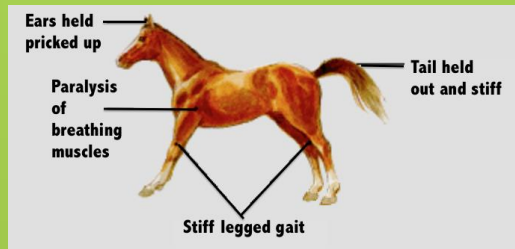


Symptoms of neurological toxicity vary depending on the plant. For example Dandelions are known to cause "Stringhalt" in horses and St Barnabys Thistle causes twitching of the lips and difficulty chewing. In general neurological toxicity often presents as colic like symptoms, wobbly gait, muscle tremors and an inability to stand. Some of the weeds that cause neurological signs are pictured below: (From L-R Bracken Fern; Dandelion; Johns Grass; Oleander trees; Pereneal ryegrass; St Barnabys Thistle; Plum tree)



**ANSWER – The horse in the picture has it's 3<sup>rd</sup> eyelid protruding and also has erect ears and an “anxious” facial expression typical of TETANUS!**

With the invention of the tetanus vaccine, tetanus has become a much rarer disease, although we will still see the occasional case presented to our hospital.



#### **What causes tetanus?**

Tetanus is caused by the bacterium *Clostridium tetanii* which can be found in soil and droppings just about everywhere. It survives in the environment for long periods of time. It enters the body through wounds, particularly puncture wounds if the wound is dirty. Puncture wounds on the sole of the foot are common sites of infection.

#### **What are the symptoms?**

Tetanus toxin attacks nerves controlling the muscles of the body. This causes progressively worsening muscular stiffness and spasm. The affected horse will become stiff and have difficulty moving and eating. The third eyelid starts to protrude across the eye, particularly if the horse is startled. The tail is often held out straight and the horse develops an anxious expression because of facial muscle spasm. In advanced cases the horse will collapse with spasms, convulsions and death from respiratory failure.

#### **Can tetanus be treated?**

Most cases of tetanus ultimately result in death of the affected animal. If diagnosed early, treatment is aimed at destroying the bacteria so that no more toxin is produced and reducing the effects of the toxin that has already been produced. Large doses of antibiotics, usually penicillin, are used in conjunction with Tetanus Antitoxin injected usually intravenously and intramuscularly.

#### **How can tetanus be prevented?**

Tetanus is an easily preventable disease. Vaccination with 'tetanus toxoid' should be used for all horses and ponies. The initial course consists of two injections given approximately 4-6 weeks apart followed by boosters at two-year intervals.

#### **WHY USE A VET FOR YOUR HORSES ANNUAL DENTAL CARE?**



Some of the signs your horse may have dental disease include; Dropping food when eating – we call this “Quidding”; Abnormal eating habits – e.g. opening mouth at strange angles when eating; Coughing or choke during or after eating; Resisting the bit when ridden; Resisting collection; Head shaking; Swelling on the face or cheeks; Head shy and/or a Nasal discharge. Often horses can have significant oral health problems and exhibit none or very subtly clinical signs. For this reason we recommend all horses have an oral examination at least once per year.

There is more to Equine Dentistry than simply rasping teeth. Being able to properly perform an oral examination and recognising pathology is essential in ensuring your horse retains a healthy smile. Preventative medicine via early detection of any problems is always the best medicine.

You could call an Equine Dentist who is NOT a Vet – OR – you could call a Veterinary Equine Dentist, who in addition to having a **greater knowledge and understanding of dental anatomy**, will be able to **legally and safely administer sedation**, which allows for a much more thorough oral examination and early detection of disease, as well as **less stress** for the horse. They also have **the ability to use a power float**, allowing for a more precise job in a shorter period of time (this is a highly safe tool when used by a trained practitioner). Veterinary equine dentists are also able to **diagnose** any other issues that may be found during the examination.

Moreover, any **other health concerns and preventative health measures**, such as dietary modification to aid management of dental conditions, can often be discussed whilst dental work is being performed by the veterinary surgeon.

Finally VETERINARY dentists have the **ability to perform further diagnostics** such as taking radiographs and can provide local anesthetic, perform dental extractions if required and prescribe pain relief, anti-inflammatories and/or antimicrobials if required.

**HEVC** have vets who are very capable Veterinary Equine Dentists and we highly recommend them for your Dental Care.