



## WINTER 2019 NEWSLETTER

Winter has arrived and these cooler months are ideal time to perform all your horse's routine care, such as teeth and vaccinations along with castrating colts when the flies are not around.

We will be running **our bi-annual discounted healthy horse package** through the month of **AUGUST** with great savings. The package will include; a physical examination, oral examination, routine dental rasp, tetanus and strangles booster, faecal egg count and an Equest plus tape wormer all for **\$230** in field (plus mileage) or **\$200** at clinic. Following on from the success of our dental

day, we are also offering further **discounts on dental work for those who bring their horses to the clinic** for their healthy horse package or dental work.

This will bring the price of **DENTALS** back to **\$100 plus sedation or \$80 plus sedation** if taken in conjunction with **Healthy Horse Package**. At the clinic we have nurses to help along with safe working crushes under cover where our vets can provide the most professional and thorough service with the horse safely restrained and handled.

In this newsletter we have put an information sheet on caring for your older horses through the winter months and we will be running a special alongside our healthy horse package for a senior horse check-up through June. Contact our lovely receptionist for more details.

### The importance of faecal egg counts in alpacas.



HEVC have recently had an increase in severe anemias in alpacas due to worms.

The most common and fatal worm found in alpacas in the Hawkesbury and Hills region is "Barbers Pole".

There is a significant resistance to many commercially available wormers and the only way to know if your alpacas are harboring resistant worms is to perform a faecal egg count.

Barbers pole is a silent killer in that the alpacas often look completely normal until they go down and have a severe and often fatal level of anaemia. To save alpacas once they get to this level of anaemia requires blood transfusions and intensive care.

We are recommending all of our alpaca clients to have faecal egg counts performed at least yearly. Please contact our receptionist for more details on having your herd tested.

### Staff News

**Huge Congratulations to Dr Jen Lugton & her partner Sam on the arrival of "Adelaide" on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April, 2019.**

**We wish her all the best with her new Family.**



## Managing your old horse for Winter

Cold weather affects older horses more than it does their younger companions. But with knowledge and planning, your senior can stay comfortable and healthy, and getting through winter doesn't have to be an ordeal. Below we will discuss some ways you can help your senior friend to get through the colder months of winter.



### **Pre-season winter veterinary exam**



A pre-winter veterinary examination is a good way to get ready for cold weather. Your veterinarian can assess your horse's weight and make specific recommendations for his nutritional needs. He or she can diagnose and address conditions such as Cushing's disease, arthritis, heart murmurs, or heaves before the cold weather makes them more difficult to manage. It can be challenging for older horses to get around when it is cold due to arthritis, foot problems, or neurologic disease. Anti-inflammatory drugs and joint supplements as prescribed by your veterinarian can help make achy joints feel better in the cold weather. Your veterinary can also perform a thorough dental exam on your senior. Whilst many senior horses stop erupting any more of their molars, loose teeth and tooth root abscesses can cause significant pain to your horse without any obvious outward signs. We recommend at least yearly dental check-ups even if their teeth do not need any further rasping.

### **Water & Feed**

Make sure older horses are drinking enough clean, warm, ice-free water during winter. Water is important for body temperature regulation and for digestion. Older horses that do not chew their grain or hay thoroughly may already be more prone to digestive disturbances, and insufficient water can lead to impaction colic. We often recommend owners add warm water to their horses hard feed to increase their water intake and improve digestion of their feed.

In cold weather, horses utilize feed to stay warm. Within minutes of eating a meal, the horse's digestive processes start to generate body heat. And over the long term, the calories not immediately converted to energy that supports bodily processes are stored as fat, which helps to insulate against the cold. Hay/fibre is metabolized more slowly than grain & because hay/fibre has a longer "burn time," it ultimately produces more heat.

IF your senior is still able to chew hay efficiently then large amounts of good quality Lucerne hay can help keep your senior warm. However, many older horses are missing some of their molar teeth and these horses are not able to chew hay and grass properly. If your veterinarian has diagnosed missing molar and/or incisor teeth in your elderly horse, we recommend that the hay is removed from the diet and replaced with chaff and other easily digested fibre substitutes eg. Fibre Essentials, Easy Fibre etc etc.



It's a good idea to increase your aging horse's feed ration during the winter. Remember that grasses have very low or little nutrient value in winter so supplementary feeding is important for good health. Horses not receiving enough feed will tend to go in a downward spiral. They will start to lose weight & then will feel the cold more so the feed being provided will be used to keep them warm with none for fat reserves. They become colder and thinner! Additionally, when the majority of a horse's nutrients go to keeping him warm, he has fewer resources left for fighting off illness or repairing tissues, leading to a decline in over-all health. Compounding the problem is the fact that older horses don't digest food nearly as efficiently as younger horses do. Their ability to digest fibre is 5 % lower and their ability to utilize protein is about 15 % lower. So even if they are being fed the same amount of feed as the younger horses, older horses will not utilize it all and can lose condition quickly:

### **Rugging**



Although a full winter coat will protect most horses well enough rugging can be very beneficial. A decision to rug or not depends on many factors including: Body condition prior to winter; Current health status – ability to move to keep warm, medical or dental conditions that effect the utilization of feed and; Owners ability to check frequently under rugs & change rugs according to weather conditions.

It is very important to take your horse's blanket off regularly as a lot of problems can go unseen under a winter blanket, especially weight loss. Older horses may not have a cushioning layer of fat over points like the withers, shoulders or hips and can develop pressure sores. Older horses with Cushing's can also be prone to bacterial

and fungal skin infections.