



Home Farm Equine Clinic

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We seem to be experiencing the longest running cold snap in several years and I'm sure we're all starting to feel like the winter is dragging on a bit. Our horses and ponies, especially the older ones, need a little extra tender loving care to ensure they remain happy and healthy in the cold weather.

There are several conditions that become more likely as horses and ponies grow older, such as Cushing's disease, arthritis, allergic airway disease, tumours and liver/kidney disease. Most of these can be controlled if diagnosed early enough and many horses and ponies go on to lead happy and comfortable lives in the presence of one or more of these conditions. Regular blood tests can be carried out to check for early warning signs of any infectious, inflammatory and metabolic diseases. If you notice any changes in your horse's behaviour that you are concerned about please contact us for a chat.

As horses grow older it is more important that they receive regular tooth care. Older horses and ponies should have their teeth checked at least once every 6 months. As well as the usual abnormal growth problems they can start to lose teeth and are more susceptible to dental infections. Problems are much easier to deal with at an early stage.

Feet should be kept trimmed regularly even if your horse is no longer being ridden. Arthritis can occur quite commonly as horses and ponies get older and can begin to limit mobility. This can result in abnormal hoof growth which can further hamper mobility and lead to associated foot pain. Foot pain can have a detrimental effect on your horse's quality of life.

Regular worming and vaccination protocols should also be adhered to as horses and ponies get older as they can become susceptible to the damaging effects of infection and parasites.

Good quality feed is essential and multi-vitamin and mineral supplements may be necessary if you are not feeding a 'complete' diet. There are many good commercial feeds available for older animals. If the pasture is poor quality then readily digestible hay should be fed as well. If your horse starts to quid (drop food) when eating get his/her teeth checked. It goes without saying that all horses and ponies should have access to clean drinking water at all times.

Nowadays the average horse lives well into their 20's and ponies even longer. They can maintain a good quality of life for many years after they finish their working life and are often good companions for younger horses or can be an excellent introduction for children to horses