



## AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2009

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### **Beware the dangers of autumn colic**

Autumn is nearly upon us and with it a new set of challenges in horse care, from the risk of laminitis with a late surge in grass growth to the danger of colic.

Colic in horses is defined generally as abdominal pain but the term can also cover a range of conditions affecting the gastrointestinal tract.

There are a variety of different causes of colic, some of which can prove fatal – in fact sadly, among domesticated horses; colic is the leading cause of premature death. The condition affects approximately 10 % of the horse population on an annual basis, so it is important to make yourself aware of what to look out for and how to manage it.

The most common forms of colic are **spasmodic** in nature which creates increased contractions in the horse's gastrointestinal tract. This is often related to stress, excitement or excessive intake of fermentable food such as spring grass.

**Pelvic flexure impaction** is caused by an impaction of food material and if left

untreated, severe impaction colic can be fatal. The most common cause is when the horse is on box rest and/or consumes large volumes of straw or is unable to chew properly.

Towards the end of the summer, **sand impaction** can be more common especially in horses that graze sandy or heavily grazed pastures leaving only dirt to ingest.

**Small intestinal impaction** is also caused by an obstruction sometimes from parasitic infection such as **tapeworm**.

After a long summer of grazing and exposure to potential parasites, now is the **time to take action and worm your horses**.



Whilst owners should ensure they are familiar with the **signs of colic**, the old wives tale that 'prevention is better than cure' can certainly be applied to the

condition. A few simple steps can help avoid a case of colic and save a visit from one of the practice team.

- Ensure all hard feed is secure and cannot be accessed by greedy mouths – a sudden excess of carbohydrates can result in colic.
- Don't feed directly on the ground as this could lead to sand colic.
- Feed the appropriate amount at the same time every day. A disrupted feeding routine can be enough to bring on a bout of colic in some horses.
- Worm horses regularly. A good parasite control program can help prevent colic caused by parasites.
- Introduce changes in diet slowly; start feeding hay/haylage in the field before you bring horses inside for the winter.
- Spraying Jeyes fluid on bedding can help deter greedy horses from eating it.
- Exercise horses daily.

If you suspect colic in your horse, it is important to **call the vet** as there are many reasons why a horse could be suffering from abdominal pain, some serious, and some not. Whilst you are waiting for the vet to attend, walk it around as this can often help resolve

gassy, spasmodic or mildly impacted colic. Try to stop your horse rolling but if you cannot, put it in a place where it is least likely to injure itself and you.

If you are confused about implementing a **strategic worming programme**, please contact the practice and we can arrange a straightforward system for you to follow which will protect your horse.

It is important to worm horses for tapeworm at this time of year so look for a wormer that contains **praziquantel** or **pyrantel** (double dose).

If you have any further questions then don't hesitate to contact us on **01270 628888**.

From

**Rhiannan and all the Equine Team**

