



spring newsletter 2015

Spring 2015

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Artificial Insemination or Natural Covering?

Strangles PASS scheme - What's it all about?

Advanced Equine Practitioner status awarded

New Online Equine Repeat Prescription Facility

Upcoming Events



Two of our final year students with our swish newly branded cars.

Contact

The Dick Vet Equine Practice

The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies

The University of Edinburgh

Easter Bush Campus

Midlothian

EH25 9RG

UK

tel: 0131 650 6253

out of hours tel: 01223 849 835

fax: 0131 650 8824

web: www.DickVetEquine.com

email: EQH@ed.ac.uk

facebook: facebook.com/DickVetEquine

twitter: Twitter.com/DickVetEquine

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Welcome to the Spring 2015 DVEP newsletter. We have had a busy winter and things have only recently quietened down a bit, allowing us to catch up. We are now right in the midst of a new final year vet curriculum so, since January, all the students we have in DVEP have already completed core equine rotations, have passed their final year written examinations and are in their elective periods, specialising in horses. They should be bursting with knowledge so feel free to test them with your queries!

Tess has been busy organising us all, developing a new set of client evenings to hopefully provide many of you with some interesting outings in the next few months! The details of these are listed at the back of this newsletter. Numbers have been limited because of the hands-on nature of these events and restricted to our own clients; if you have missed out we will likely run these sessions again in the near future. We will of course continue to run our regular client evenings through the year, open to as many of the local horse community as possible. We also look forward to seeing lots of you out and about at the Royal Highland Show where our equine vets will be providing on site emergency cover, day and night.

This month's newsletter focuses on mare reproduction (topical for the spring!) and strangles. Louise compares the pros and cons of artificial insemination versus natural covering; if you are considering putting your mare into foal it is very worth speaking to Louise at an early stage, so that she can guide you through the process. Meanwhile Tess has provided a simple guide on page 3 to the PASS scheme, run by the SAC and designed to help prevent the entry of strangles onto yards. The idea is taken from cattle health schemes which are very successful and while this horse-orientated initiative maybe not relevant to everyone's situation, it can offer a really good way of maximising your biosecurity measures. If you are interested or have more questions, ask any of our vets for more information.

Finally we are very excited to announce that, due to an increase in everyone's workload, we are advertising soon for a new experienced equine vet for the practice to add to the team. We are hoping for some good applicants who can help us continue to improve the practice.....watch out for more details in the next newsletter or on Facebook.

Artificial Insemination or Natural Covering?

Advances in reproductive technology over the past decade have greatly improved artificial insemination (AI) pregnancy rates and it is now practised widely throughout the UK in many different breeds, the most notable exception being the racing Thoroughbred. Natural service is still the best option in some situations, though, depending on the type of mare, and has proved successful since Eohippus roamed the earth 50 million years ago!

AI has a number of advantages over natural service, but also some drawbacks which must be considered:

Advantages:

- Much wider choice of stallion, including those standing abroad
- Less risk of introducing infection to mare or stallion
- Safer for the mare, stallion and handlers – many stallions do not offer natural service due to the risk of a kick injury from a mare

Disadvantages:

- Closer monitoring of the mare's cycle by ultrasound scanning is necessary
- Extra veterinary, collection and transport costs
- Some stallion semen is unsuitable for chilling or freezing
- Some mares are unsuitable for insemination with frozen semen

Three methods of AI are available – fresh, chilled or frozen semen. When fresh semen is used, the mare and stallion are resident at the same premises and semen is transferred to the mare shortly after collection. Chilled semen is only practical for stallions residing in the UK or some parts of mainland Europe as semen must be delivered within 24 hours of collection, but frozen semen may be obtained from stallions standing anywhere in the world. The pregnancy rates achieved using fresh or chilled semen approach those obtained by natural service, but frozen semen pregnancy rates are lower.

Most mares will be suitable for insemination with chilled semen, but frozen semen is less likely to be suitable for maiden mares over 15 years of age, those to be bred

on the foal heat or mares with a history of being difficult to get in foal. If you have a particular stallion in mind, it is worth checking at the outset whether chilled or frozen semen is available from him, and discussing the suitability of your mare with your vet.

Chilled semen AI may be carried out on your own premises in some circumstances, depending on the facilities available, the nature of the mare, your availability (as well as ours!) and the location of the yard. Due to the necessity for frequent scans when frozen semen is used, it is almost essential that mares are resident at the hospital for this procedure.

It is generally more expensive to breed a mare using AI rather than natural service due to the intensive labour involved and the following costs must be considered:

- Cost of the semen itself (stud fee)
- Charge made by the stud for collecting the semen from the stallion and processing it
- Transportation costs (including hire of Equitainer or equivalent for chilled semen, liquid nitrogen for frozen semen)
- Veterinary costs, including scanning, tests, drugs and other treatments
- Stabling fee at hospital or veterinary call-out charge
- Pregnancy scanning

It is worth remembering that, even in the best of circumstances, only about 60% of young healthy mares bred naturally or with fresh or chilled semen AI will go into foal on the first cycle, and the percentage drops to 40-50% when frozen semen is used, so two or more cycles may be needed. Some of the costs mentioned above will then be repeated. A few mares may remain barren despite all efforts.

We offer package prices for mares coming into the hospital for AI:

- Chilled semen £280 incl VAT
- Frozen semen £350 incl VAT

These prices are 'per cycle' and include stabling, scanning, insemination and an

ovulation hormone. They do not include extra drugs or procedures which may be needed or pregnancy scans.

If you would like to discuss the use of artificial insemination further, please contact Louise.

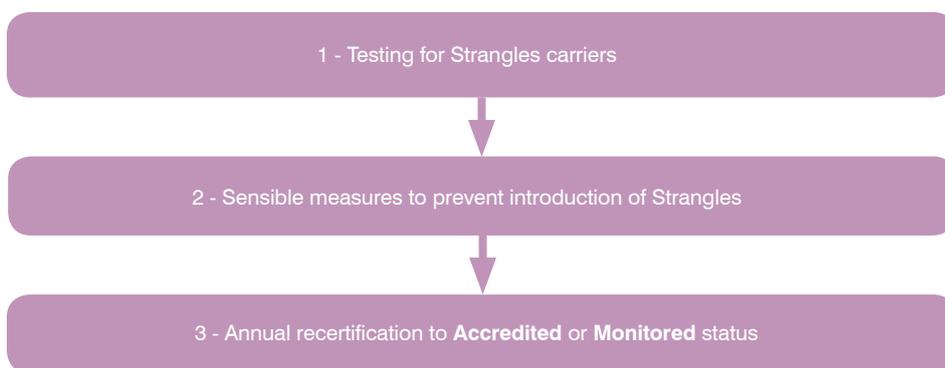


Strangles PASS scheme - What's it all about?



What is it?

- a voluntary scheme for equine premises
- member yards follow clear, sensible guidelines for maintaining a Strangles free yard
- vets are involved in every step of sampling, advice, treatment and prevention
- there are 2 levels of membership;
 - Gold 'Accredited' membership
 - Silver 'Monitored' membership



What are the benefits?

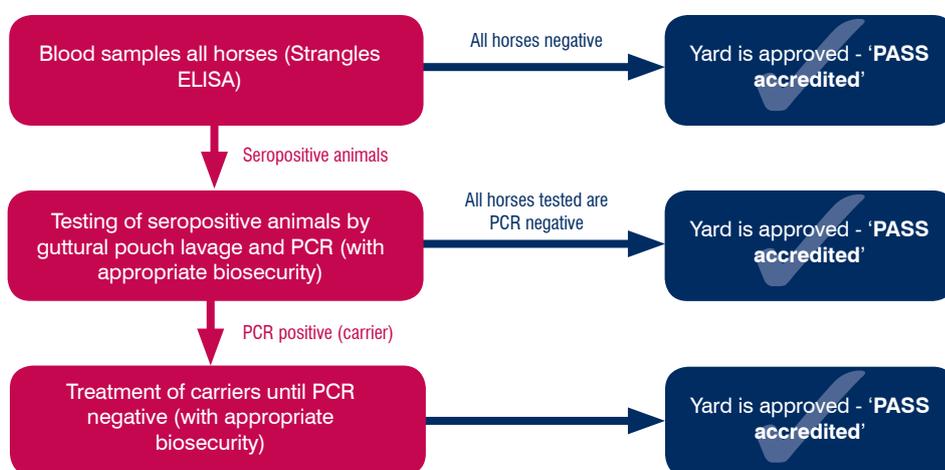
- this does not guarantee that the yard cannot ever get Strangles but it does tell you that the yard is doing everything it can to prevent it
- a discount on testing for the scheme
- member yards enjoy an enhanced status amongst the equine community
- the risk of disease is reduced on member yards as there is a reduction in carrier animals

How does my yard become a member?

- The yard manager and primary veterinary surgeon applies to the scheme to begin testing
- Every horse on the yard has a blood sample taken to test for antibodies to Strep. Equi. (Strangles)
- The 'negatives' have no further testing
- The 'inconclusives' are retested in 10-14 days
- The 'positives' are treated appropriately for active infection or carrier status
- The yard becomes accredited for 1 year

Then what happens?

- The yard follows biosecurity guidelines and guidelines for the introduction of new horses with their veterinary surgeon
- After 1 year yards can choose either to perform annual re-blood sampling of all the horses on the yard to retain their 'Accredited' status or they can sign a declaration with their veterinary surgeon and have 'Monitored' status



How do we prevent Strangles getting onto a yard?

- Practice sensible biosecurity in conjunction with your vet
- Guidelines are laid out in the STEPS framework (STeps to Eradicate and Prevent Strangles)
- Incoming horses are tested for Strangles and quarantined appropriately
- Horses attending competitions adhere to the STEPS biosecurity programme and provided there is no known exposure or clinical signs do not require further testing

What's the catch?

- There is a cost associated with the initial blood sample and any additional testing that may be required if the blood test comes back as a positive or an inconclusive
- Your horse may have to undergo guttural pouch endoscopy (£150-£200) if the initial blood sample comes back positive

How do I find out more?

- Call us on 0131 650 6253 if you wish to discuss further getting involved with the scheme or to discuss your yards biosecurity protocols

Repeat Prescriptions

We are pleased to inform you that we now offer an online equine repeat prescription facility. You follow the link: www.dickvetequineprescriptions.com complete the form and this comes direct to the equine reception. Our receptionists will then have this authorised by one of the practice vets and we will then contact you when it is ready for collection from the equine reception.

Advanced Equine Practitioners!

We are delighted to announce that both Louise and Jenny have been awarded Advanced Practitioner status by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. The Advanced Practitioner status is designed to represent a 'middle tier' between qualified vets and Specialist status (which the vets in the Equine Hospital have on account of their high degree of specialisation or in the case of Residents they will be working

towards this). The AP is a great recognition of their experience, the fact that they keep up-to-date and their commitment to equine primary care/general equine practice. Having good first opinion equine practitioners is just as important as Specialists so this new qualification is a great step forward.

www.rcvs.org.uk/education/advanced-practitioner-status/



Upcoming Events

CPD course for horse owners (10th, 17th, 24th, 31st March)

We've been overwhelmed with the positive response for this and could have filled the course a few times over! Don't worry if you missed out this time – we plan to run the course again later in the year and will send out information nearer the time!

Reproduction Evening (April: exact date TBC)

Another interactive evening similar to the colic and geriatric evenings you may have already attended. Come and see the placenta and uterus of a horse, learn how to assess and handle a young foal, hear about how we go about getting a mare in foal and learn about all things foaling! This will be open to everybody with the usual cakes to start!

Heart and Lungs (Summer: exact date TBC)

Come and see our overground endoscope in action, scan a horse's chest to find its heart and lungs, quiz our experts, have a go at finding a horse's pulse, using a stethoscope, see how we use an ECG on our teaching pony herd and learn about how crucial the heart and lungs are to a healthy horse and a performance horse.

As always we are very pleased to hear your views and for you to tell us what you would like covered in our education programme – we'll do our best to make your ideas a reality so do let us know if you've any topics you're keen for us to cover!

Our Veterinary Surgeons



Jenny Clements
BVSc, MSc, Cert EIM, MRCVS



Eugenio Cillán-García
LV MRCVS



Louise Cornish
BVMS Cert EP MRCVS



Tess Fordham
BVMedSci BVM BVS MRCVS

Ably assisted by our team of excellent hospital residents

Front office staff

Trish O'Donnell, Morven Kerr, Joanne Smith



0131 650 6253

Jenny Clements is an official measurer for the Joint Measurement Board and is busy measuring in preparation for the up and coming season. She also measures at the Royal Highland Show in June as part of The Dick Vet Equine Practice's official equine veterinary cover for the show. If you require a JMB certificate to compete your horse or pony, please contact the practice on **0131 650 6253**. You don't have to be a client of the practice to use the measuring service, so please tell your friends.