

# THE ROYAL (DICK) SCHOOL OF VETERINARY STUDIES

## Dick Vet Equine Practice Newsletter



Welcome to the spring edition of our Equine Practice Newsletter.

For those of you that have been clients of the Dick Vet for a long time, you will be aware that the practice has evolved over the last 10-15 years. From a mixed large animal practice we now have a team of vets who only treat horses and ponies, the Dick Vet Equine Practice (DVEP).

There are many more exciting changes afoot to enhance the veterinary service to our equine clients. From June 2012 the practice will merge fully with the Equine Hospital. This integration has been occurring behind the scenes for a number of years and we feel it will make the service to you run smoother and more efficiently.

**Enclosed you will find specific information explaining all the changes in detail;** for example there will be a joint Equine Reception and some of the phone numbers may change. We feel that this is a really positive thing for the practice allowing it to move with the times and become a modern equine veterinary practice offering first class care. If you have any questions or concerns about these changes, please feel free to contact us.

### The Royal Highland Show 2012

DVEP are the equine vets in attendance again at the Highland Show. Thankfully we often have little to do but we are there for the odd cuts, grazes and colics that happen to any of the competing horses. Look out for us at the show, around the show ring or on the Dick Vet stand.

### Misbehaving horses?

Gemma Pearson our equine intern has recently given 2 client evenings in the North of England and the borders, focussing on equine behaviour that have been very well received and stimulated much interest. Gemma has a special interest in equine behaviour and is always keen to talk to owners with horses that may have behaviour problems. Gemma will be discussing equine behaviour at one of our future client evenings, so look out for that in the coming summer.

### **Faecal Worm Egg Counting**

We have been advocating the use of faecal worm egg counts as a way of monitoring your horses parasite burden for some time now and it has proved very popular. All you need to do is drop off a small sample of very fresh dung into the practice and we will do the rest. You will get a phone call with the results and advice as to whether or not your horse needs to be wormed at that time. A small request from us though is to call us before you bring in 3 or more samples so we can set aside some time to do them.



If you would like more information or would like to let us know that you are bringing in several samples for us to examine then call us on 0131 650 6253.

### What's in this season's newsletter:

1. Client evenings
2. Money saving tips
3. Foal checks
4. Painful eye
5. Horse dentistry

### Practice Staff

#### Veterinary Surgeons:

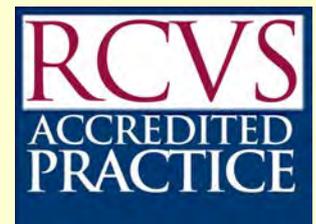
**Matt Hanks** BVSc MRCVS  
**Malcolm Corsar** BVM&S MRCVS  
**Carol Leonard** BVSc MRCVS  
**Gemma Pearson** BVM&S MRCVS

#### Front Office Staff:

Trish O'Donnell  
Joanne Smith  
Morven Kerr

#### Opening Hours

Monday to Friday: 9am-5pm  
During these times phone:  
0131 650 6253  
After hours phone:  
01223 849835



The Dick Vet Equine Practice is a Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons accredited Practice.



**After Hours Emergency Number**  
**01223 849 835**  
**Scan the code and save to your phone**  
**Normal hours phone**  
**0131 650 6253**

### **3 Ways to save money with the Dick Vet Equine Practice**

**With money being tight for everyone, here are three ways the DVEP can always save you money.**

#### **1. Shared Visits -**

Did you know that you can save big money by having your yard-mates share the vet visit costs. For example we offer a 49% discount when there are two of you and a 65% discount when there are 3 or more of you! That's a vet visit for as little as £13.75 inc VAT!

#### **2. Mix and Match**

Get more than one thing done to your horse per visit. Many people have different dates to vaccinate and do their horses teeth. The two procedures are completely safe to do on the same day! Getting your horses teeth done AND vaccinated on the same day will save you a visit fee!

#### **3. Get in Line**

Get all your horses' treatments done at the same time. For example, get all your horses' vaccinations done on the same day! The vaccinations your horses receive is quite safe to be given at 6 month intervals. So if you have 3 horses and they are all vaccinated on different days then you will be paying an extra £79.40. If you have 8 horses the extra cost will be £277.90!

### **Foal Checks**

At this time of year some of you are expecting foals. This can be an exciting time! To make things go even smoother follow these simple tips:

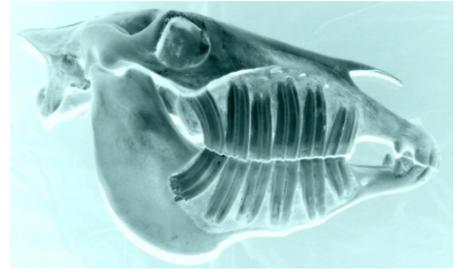
1. Get mum and foal checked - The next day it is a very good idea to make sure both are normal and healthy. It doesn't take very long and could flag up any conditions that need to be addressed or monitored such as cleft palate or bent legs.
2. Get us to give foal a tetanus antitoxin injection - because horses are very sensitive to tetanus toxin we give all newborn foals a tetanus antitoxin. This is not a vaccination but will protect the foal for about 10 weeks or so.
3. Save placenta for us to examine - we must make sure the mare has cleansed properly.
4. Dip foal's navel - to stop nasty infections the foals navel needs to be dipped in antiseptic. Give us a call for options.
5. Give foal an enema - This will be done when the foal is examined and just makes sure all meconium is passed.
6. If concerned about colostrum (first milk) get your new foal checked for IgG - if low antibody levels are found, your foal is at great risk and may need plasma to boost immunity.



# Horse Dentistry

Unlike humans, cats and dogs, horses have very long reserve crowns (the portion of the tooth under the gum) which continue to erupt slowly throughout their life until they wear out at approximately 30-40 years.

The rate of eruption is approximately 2-3mm a year and is balanced by the grinding away of the dental surface by abrasive plant materials and silicates in their diet. If dental wear and eruption rates are unequal, teeth will develop overgrowths which can cause painful ulcers in the horse's mouth. In the wild, horses would normally graze for 16-18 hours a day. Stabling the horse for long periods of time and feeding concentrates (which require far less chewing) vastly decrease the amount of wear to the horse's teeth and can predispose to overgrowths forming.



Equine *maxillary* (upper) cheek teeth are also set wider than the *mandibular* (lower) cheek teeth, such that their *occlusal* (chewing) surfaces meet at a 10-15° angle. The horse has a one-sided circular motion when chewing food so that the food is ground as the mandibular cheek teeth move inwards over the surface of the opposing maxillary cheek teeth. Reduced hours of chewing leads to reduced wear at the far edges of the teeth allowing overgrowths (enamel *points*) to develop on the outer aspect of the upper cheek teeth and the inner edge of the lower cheek teeth. These can cause ulceration of the cheeks and tongue respectively.



Fig 1. A horse showing cheek ulceration caused by sharp enamel overgrowths.

Common dental problems are sharp enamel overgrowths, displaced teeth, 'steps' (overgrown teeth), 'hooks' (overgrowths on the first upper cheek teeth and last lower cheek teeth), gaps between teeth (diastema), periodontal disease, caries and fractured teeth. Signs you may notice if your horse has a dental problem are: dropping partially chewed food (quidding), weight loss, hamster-like food pouching in the cheeks, long (more than 2mm) faecal fibre length, biting problems, head shaking, hanging to one side when ridden, smelly nasal discharge and facial swelling. However, many horses have sharp enamel overgrowths and oral ulceration (fig 1) without showing any obvious signs of pain and so, even if your horse has none of the above signs, dental

abnormalities may still be present.

The dental examination should always be performed using a full mouth speculum (gag). Some horses may need sedating to place a gag, particularly for the first time. It is impossible to examine or feel the back of the horse's mouth safely without one of these gags and so it is an absolute prerequisite for a thorough dental examination.

Many different kinds of motorised and manual rasps are now available, including tungsten carbide chip, solid tungsten carbide and motorised grinding units. To perform a proper float, a good selection of rasps of different sizes and angles should be available. Motorised equipment is useful for removing large dental overgrowths and is much safer than the dental shears used previously. The Dick Vet Equine Practice has two different motorised dental instruments, including a Flexi-float Ultra system.

If you would like your horses teeth checked then call us on 0131 650 6253.

## The Painful Equine Eye

Signs of a painful eye in the horse are variable and include an increase in tear production or eye discharge. Often the eye may be discoloured, cloudy or red and the horse squints or keeps the eye closed. In some horses these signs can be subtle. Unfortunately a wide variety of conditions can cause your horse's eye to be painful, and without a detailed examination it is impossible to determine the extent and cause of the problem. Often horses with painful eyes are reluctant to allow such an examination, without sedation and local anaesthetic drops on the surface of the cornea. Fluorescein green dye is often used to show up any damage to surface of the eye (a corneal ulcer), which may be caused by direct trauma to the eye.



Fig 1 - Horse with fluorescein dye in its eye to show up corneal ulceration



The treatment of a painful eye will depend on the underlying cause. Eye drops are often required to be administered regularly, a number of times during the day. Some horses will require antibiotics drops or ointment if an infection is present. Other conditions such as Equine Recurrent Uveitis require intensive use of anti-inflammatory drugs, which will also provide pain relief. Special eye drops are often used in such cases to dilate the pupil, providing additional pain relief and preventing adhesions forming in the eye. The important thing to remember

is that eye conditions can be very serious, so you should always contact your vet, even if it's just for a chat over the phone.

## The Dick Vet Equine Practice

Normal opening hours are:  
Monday to Friday 9am-5pm  
During these times please phone:  
**0131 650 6253**

At all other times please phone:  
**01223 849 835**

If you call after hours, you will be asked for your message. Please give your name, contact details and the nature of the problem. This information will be passed to the duty vet, who will contact you directly.

The Dick Vet Equine Practice  
The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary  
Studies  
The University of Edinburgh  
Easter Bush Campus  
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