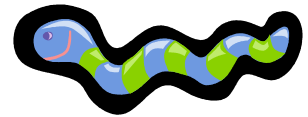


AUTUMN 2014

After a long hot summer the nights have started to be a little cooler and we are seeing some welcome rainfall. Autumn is on its way.

INTESTINAL WORMING - AT CHANGE OF SEASONS



Many people that we talk to in our consultations tell us that they use the changing of the seasons as a prompt for the usual 3 monthly intestinal worming for their pets. The first day of a new season means a tablet, chew, paste or top-spot treatment for all the animals in the household. So with the arrival of Autumn it is a good time to talk about intestinal worming.

Intestinal worms steal blood and nutrients from the animal's intestinal tract. They can cause damage to the intestines and therefore abdominal pain, as well as triggering diarrhoea, loss of weight and a failure to thrive. Above all this, intestinal worms that affect our animals can also affect our children and ourselves.

Worming is recommended at 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 weeks of age in pups and kittens, then monthly until 6 months of age and finally every 3 months throughout adult life. The idea of three monthly worming is that it takes 3 months from an infective stage (egg or larva) of the worm life cycle to reach an adult worm that produces eggs. Worming every 3 months stops any worm larva reaching adulthood and then there is no contamination of the environment with worm eggs and larvae that can reinfect our pets.

We recommend worming with Drontal or Milbemax worm tablets as these have shown in studies to be the most effective at eradicating worms. There are also top-spot liquids that are absorbed through the skin such as Profender and Advocate that may be helpful in animals that are very hard to give tablets.

INTESTINAL WORMING IN HORSES

We should also remember our equine friends when we consider intestinal worming. Worms can be the source of significant intestinal irritation, colic signs and weight loss in horses.

De-worming in horses can be approached more strategically than the blanket 3 monthly approach in our pets. As horses live in a more natural environment we can use the seasons as a means of helping us with eradicating worms. Infective eggs and larvae on the pasture tend to survive best in wetter conditions and tend to die off during the hot and dry summer months. Worming your horses now will kill worms they are carrying and return them to pastures that should be largely or completely free of eggs or larvae that can reinfect them. If you can also return the horses to a paddock that has not been grazed at all over the summer the effectiveness of deworming rises even further.

The other approach that can be taken with horses is the submission of a fecal sample to a lab for fecal egg counting to identify if the horse is actually carrying any worms at all. These tests can be organised through your veterinarian or even independently and inexpensively through the ParaSite lab. If worm eggs or larvae are identified then worming can proceed. If none are identified then worming is not currently necessary and money is saved on not buying drenches. The lab can also do drench resistance testing to determine the best type of drench you can use in your horses. Fecal egg counts can be done 3 or 4 times a year to assess parasite burdens.

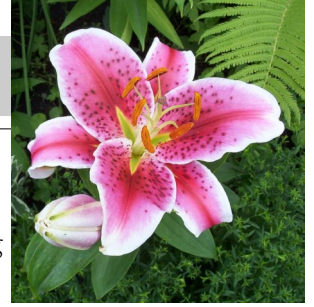
If fecal egg counts are not used as a basis for when to worm your horses a general guide to worming would be 4 doses a year. One each at the beginning and end of Summer and once again in Winter and Spring. One active ingredient should be used for 12 months and then a different one for the next 12 months to try and minimise the build up of drench resistance.

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LILIES AND KIDNEY FAILURE IN CATS



The Stargazer Lily

The Lily is a very beautiful flower, but unfortunately it can be poisonous to cats even in very small amounts. Lilies are a very commonly given and received flower in bouquets and also as live plants in gardens. A variety of these plants can be toxic to cats including the Stargazer Lily, Tiger Lily, Day Lily, Easter Lily and Asian Lily.

The actual toxic component of the lily has not been identified, but it causes kidney failure in even very small doses. Cats may also show gastrointestinal signs or neurological signs such as weakness or wobbliness on their feet. The toxin appears to be water soluble so drinking from water in vases containing lilies can also be poisonous. All parts of the plant can be poisonous, but the flowers themselves are the most poisonous part. The pollen which often falls from the cut flowers is also poisonous and may get in the coat of cats and be subsequently ingested as they groom themselves. Signs of poisoning usually occur within 6-12 hours of ingestion and begin with vomiting and lethargy. Increased thirst may be observed as the kidneys fail (within 24-72 hours) to concentrate the urine and water is lost through excessive urination. In more severe cases tremors or seizures may be witnessed. There is no antidote, but prompt hospitalisation and IV fluids give the poisoned cat the best chance of recovery. Without treatment mortality rates have been reported of 100%. Beginning treatment prior to the kidneys failing will give the best chance of survival and recovery. As with most things prevention is better than cure. If you have a cat in the household it is best to not have lilies in the house or garden. Without exposure there can be no poisoning.

Dogs can develop gastrointestinal upset from eating the above lily types, but do not tend to develop kidney failure. Peace Lilies and Calla lilies are not true lilies and do not cause kidney failure in dogs or cats, but both can create gastrointestinal upset (vomiting or diarrhoea).

NEWSLETTER MAILING LIST

We produce a 4 page newsletter every season to keep our clients informed about the goings on at Warby St Veterinary Hospital and the Wangaratta Equine Hospital. We send the newsletter out with our statements each time it is printed, but also deliver it electronically by email. If you would like to receive the newsletter in your email inbox you can either email me your address at tim@warbyvet.com.au or fill out the slip below and return it to Warby St Vet Hospital or Wangaratta Equine Hospital in person or by snail mail.

YES! I'D LIKE TO RECEIVE THE QUARTERLY WARBY ST VET HOSPITAL NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL!

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A service for routine work provided most **TUESDAYS** charging travel fees from:

Glenrowan, Greta, Moyhu or Milawa.

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For routine work most **THURSDAYS**, travel fees from:

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MILK FEVER

As the Autumn calving season begins to ramp up we begin to see cases of Milk Fever associated with the demands of milk production and the subsequent drain on the cow's calcium resources.

Milk Fever is caused by a deficiency of calcium in the body. It tends to affect older cows that have had several calves and presents itself shortly before or just after calving. Some cases can occur several weeks after calving however when milk production and therefore demand for calcium reaches its peak. Milk Fever is more common in dairy herds, with Jersey cows being particularly prone, but can also occur in beef cattle. Signs of the disease begin with agitation or wobbliness on the feet and progress to collapse and an inability to get back up. Milk Fever is one of the main causes of "Down Cows". Calcium is very important in muscle contraction so a deficiency makes animals very weak and also begins to affect the muscle of the heart which reduces the ability to pump blood around the body. Some animals may be found dead as a result of milk fever.

Milk Fever is usually diagnosed based on the history, clinical signs and physical examination. Cows are often down, but remain relatively bright in the early stages. As time progresses the head will droop towards the flank and weakness worsens. The sounds of the heart are often very quiet when listened to with a stethoscope as the heart muscle is only pumping very weakly. In a down cow around calving other possibilities such as calving paralysis or grass tetany also need to be considered as a cause of milk fever.

Treatment of milk fever when instigated early on in the disease is usually successful. Farmers often give several 500ml pouches of 4 in 1 under the skin when they suspect milk fever. This product contains calcium, magnesium, glucose and phosphorous. This often corrects the calcium deficiency and will also help in some cases of grass tetany. When the cow is not responding or is particularly weak intravenous 4 in 1 or calcium borogluconate pouches will be needed. Adding calcium directly back into the blood leads to rapid improvement, but can be hazardous if added too quickly. In a worse case scenario intravenous calcium given too quickly can cause major heart problems and possibly death.

Supplementing cows in the last 4 weeks before calving with dry feed (rather than lush green grass) can help to reduce the occurrence of milk fever. In a dairy herd processed diets are usually changed to accommodate the demands of lactation on the cow.

KEEPING MICROCHIP DETAILS UP TO DATE

Microchipping of our pets became mandatory in Victoria several years ago. All pets should be microchipped and registered with the local council by the time they are 3 months of age. A microchip serves as a permanent means of identifying your pet and a way to get them home if they are ever lost. As a microchip is implanted under the skin it is a more failsafe method of identification than tags on collars which can fall off. However the basis of the microchip system working is the information that exists on the national register for your pet's microchip number. When your pet is first microchipped the address and phone numbers collected will no doubt be correct, but with time, changes of address and even changes of ownership mean that the information attached to the pet's microchip can become incorrect. The system really only works if you keep the information up to date so if your pet is ever lost you can be contacted correctly and quickly.

If you ever move house or change phone numbers you should update this information with your microchipping register. If the ownership of your pet changes your vet can provide a change of ownership form, or you can arrange this directly through the microchip registry. The other big problem we see is when people buy a puppy or kitten and don't have the pet's ownership changed into their name. Most pups and kittens are microchipped in the name of their breeders before sale and a form needs to be filled out to change their ownership into the new owner's name. After several years many people have forgotten or lost the paperwork regarding which register their pet is on. A good online resource to help with this is www.petaddress.com.au where you can enter your pet's microchip number and be informed which register you need to contact. If you need to know your pet's microchip number your vet can scan them and provide the number to you. Once you know their register you can contact them to enquire if your details are correct.

A microchip is a very good tool to help return lost pets home, but it relies on up to date information being stored on the register so you can be contacted quickly and easily if your pet is lost.



A pet microchip compared in size to rice grains

STRINGHALT

Stringhalt is an involuntary, exaggerated flexion of the hock during walking, and can affect one or both hindlimbs. In Australia it can occur in outbreak form, related to the ingestion of flatweed (*Hypochoeris radicata*, also known as cats ear or false dandelion). Other plants suspected to play a role include dandelion and capeweed, but good evidence of any role these plants play is lacking. It is not yet known how the weed affects nerves, but it causes a peripheral neuropathy. Not all horses grazing flatweed pastures will develop stringhalt.

Outbreaks typically occur late summer and autumn, in drought situations where flatweed is ingested where it would otherwise not be eaten by horses. Hay from these pastures is made in late Spring/early summer and not associated with clinical disease when consumed by horses.

Flatweed is very common around the Wangaratta area, and we had several cases of Stringhalt last Autumn around the King Valley area. Below are pictures to assist in differentiating it from dandelion



Flatweed (False dandelion)

Flatweed Leaf

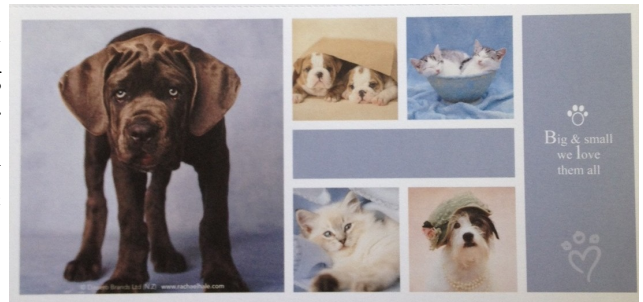
Dandelion

Affected horses appear normal standing, and their general health is good, although sometimes they may find it difficult to graze. It affects the long nerves in the hind legs, and the left recurrent laryngeal nerve (nerve innervating the larynx). Abnormal movement is seen when the horse begins to move, and the hock is brought up quickly to the abdomen (sometimes kicking the horse), held there for a moment and then stamped to the ground. Mildly affected horses may only show this movement when they are backed or turned. They may show a 'bunny hopping gait' at the walk or canter. Horses may also make a roaring noise when exercising, temporarily becoming 'roarers' due to the laryngeal nerve involvement.

Most horses recover without treatment over several months (as long as they are removed from the pasture), but in some complete recovery takes over a year. Severely affected horses may not recover. A medication is available that can get some improvement in clinical signs, but they return a couple of days after treatment is discontinued.

VACCINATION REMINDERS

We know that a lot of our clients rely on us sending them reminders when their animals are due for ongoing preventative health measures, like vaccinations or cartrophen injections for arthritis. We have always relied on posted reminders in envelopes in the past, which we feel are beneficial because of their tangible nature. A letter pinned to the fridge or notice board keeps on being visible and keeps on reminding us to get our pets into the vet. We are continuing on with posted reminders, but you may notice that they have changed to a more colourful smaller postcard type compared to the old letter in an envelope. These reminders still contain the same information as before and help the environment a little by reducing paper use. We are also trying to move with the times and technology and looking at sending reminders by email or SMS. All transmitted reminders rely on us having accurate contact information so if you think your address or mobile phone number may be out of date on your client record please let us know so we can continue to remind you effectively when your animals are due for a visit, test or treatment.



One of our new postcard style reminder notices. Coming to a mailbox near you soon!