

Autumn Newsletter



March - May 2008.

Heliotrope Poisoning

You only have to take a drive anywhere in the North-East to realise the dangers of heliotrope poisoning at the moment. It's everywhere! Most people understand the dangers of heliotrope poisoning but are not sure what to do to control the weed and to prevent their animals being affected.

Common Heliotrope (which is different to Blue Heliotrope) is also known as potato weed or caterpillar weed and belongs to the same family as Paterson's Curse and forget-me-nots. It is a summer fallow weed that thrives on cultivated, open ground. Seeds germinate in warm, moist conditions after late spring or summer rain, i.e. perfect conditions this year! Growth is prolific where seedlings are not shaded and there is no competition from perennial plants. Heliotrope has an enormous seeding potential and seeds are viable for many years, but they are very susceptible to competition, shading and frost.

Livestock Toxicity

When heliotrope is eaten, the absorbed pyrrolizidine alkaloids form compounds that damage the liver and this increases with additional intakes of the plant. Poisoning is usually chronic and signs of sickness are delayed for weeks, months or years after consumption, so it is important to ask your agent whether any livestock you are purchasing have ever grazed heliotrope.

Horses are the most susceptible to heliotrope poisoning showing signs of weight loss, depression, unco-ordination and eventually seizures or aimless wandering. Cattle, having a rumen are a little less susceptible, but can still show signs of depression, unpredictable bouts of aggression and death. Sheep and goats seem to be particularly resistant to the effects of heliotrope, but can still be affected by the poison which can cause copper accumulation and death.

Methods of Control

Effective control of heliotrope involves a combination of the following options to reduce the seed bank and therefore germination in later years.

- A) Cultivation: controls seedling growth.
- B) Pasture Management: heliotrope is not an aggressive plant, so maintaining a vigorous pasture of competitive perennials, such as lucerne, will help to control this weed. Minimum tillage and stubble retention will also help to reduce heliotrope in pasture.
- C) Grazing Management: Overgrazing of the pasture must be avoided as this will reduce competition and allow growth of heliotrope. Sheep and goats can be used to graze heliotrope-infested paddocks, provided different animals are used each year. Merinos have been shown to have the highest tolerance, but adult wethers rather than breeding stock should be used. Management of grazing is critical for the control of this weed and even more critical if Paterson's Curse is also present in the pasture.
- D) Chemical Control: this is most commonly used in fallow situations or degraded pastures. Only a registered herbicide should be used according to the directions on the label. Heliotrope is most susceptible to chemical management when it is young and actively growing, i.e. Less than 70mm high. Repeat applications are necessary to control later germinations.

If you would like more information on managing heliotrope and heliotrope poisoning, please pop into the clinic to have a chat. Alternatively, your local stock agent should have some information and the DPI has useful fact sheets on heliotrope poisoning.

Calf Scours

Autumn calving season is soon to be upon us and with that, cooler and hopefully, wetter weather that seems to encourage calf scours. We have had quite a lot of people in the clinic recently asking about vaccination for specific calf scour diseases. Below is some general information regarding calf scours and the vaccinations available.

Scours is the most common illness we see in the first month of life. It is caused by many organisms and often, more than one causative agent is present in the one animal. Viruses, usually rotavirus is the most common cause, but protozoa such as cryptosporidia and coccidian and bacteria such as salmonella and E.coli also cause significant problems.

Prevention

- Newborn calves should receive at least 2L of colostrums within 12 hours of birth. Ideally, 2L of good quality colostrums within 1 hour of birth and another further 2L 12 hours later.
- If calves are to be housed, house them in warm, dry, well-ventilated, clean locations and clean this location regularly.
- Quarantine all introduced calves for 7 days in an area not used by home calves.
- Quickly separate new cases of diarrhoea from the unaffected calves, and clean up any contamination.
- Individually identify scouring calves and record any changes in their condition so that a reliable assessment of their dehydration can be made.

Treatment

Treatment of calf scours is based around rehydration and support through the disease. As viruses and protozoa are the most common causes, antibiotics aren't the 'be-all and end-all' and prevention is really the key.

- Oral electrolyte solutions provide a balanced source of salts, fluids and energy and can be fed up to 6 times a day. They are best used at body temperature and the amount required depends on the degree of dehydration of the calf.
- Vaccination for specific diseases;
 - *E.coli* vaccination (Bovac *E.coli*) can provide protection in the first weeks of life via vaccination of the dam. Heifers and previously unvaccinated cows are given 2 doses, the first 6-8 weeks prior to calving and the second, 2-3 weeks prior. An annual booster is required and should be given 2-3 weeks before calving.
 - Bovilis S vaccine protects calves against two types of Salmonella, *S.dublin* and *S.typhimurium*. Heifers and previously unvaccinated cows require two doses, 3-4 weeks apart, with the last dose given 3-8 weeks before calving. An annual booster is also necessary and should be given 3-8 weeks prior to calving.

If you would like any more information, please ask our friendly staff! We are able to order vaccines in for you.

“King Valley Run”

A service provided every **Tuesday** charging **TRAVEL fees** from Glenrowan, Greta, Moyhu or Milawa.

“Beechworth & Myrtleford Valley Run”

A service provided every **Thursday** charging **TRAVEL fees** from Markwood, Everton, Beechworth and Myrtleford

Desexing Your Pet- Why?

Pet owners need to make a decision whether they would like to have their pet desexed or leave it entire. If you do not intend to breed, you should have your pet desexed. If you decide to leave you pet entire, remember you are responsible for fulfilling extra obligations and this requires extra effort and commitment.

Advantages of desexing your female cat or dog:

- Decreases the risk of several, life-threatening conditions. Including;
 - mammary/breast cancer- every time your pet is in heat, the chances of developing this are increased.
 - Pyometra- infection of the uterus, which if not treated, can be fatal.
 - Cancer of the ovaries and uterus.
 - Reduces costs of care for your female pet, there is no cost of looking after and feeding puppies/kittens and their mums. Also there is no chance you will have to pay for a caesarean or cost of treating mastitis and other birth-related illnesses.
 - Avoids your pet coming into heat and the accompanying discharges and invasion by all the neighbourhood pets.
 - Prevents unwanted attention from persevering males and potential damage to your property.
- Prevents unwanted pups/kittens- population control in our society is a very real issue, ask anyone who works in an animal shelter.

Advantages of Desexing your male cat or dog;

- In cats, the chances of urine spraying are greatly reduced. In entire male cats, urine is very pungent and unwelcoming.
 - Reduces wandering and therefore reduces the chances of your pet being hit by a car, attacked by another animal, getting lost or even being abused by other people.
 - Male cats will be less territorial and will hopefully not be in as many fights as entire males and therefore reduce the risk of injury.
 - Reduces the risk of testicular cancer
 - Reduces the incidence of problems occurring in the prostate gland, perineal hernias and hormone-related tumours.
 - Reduces aggressive behaviour, if it is related to hormones. If the aggression is related to guarding territory, this will not change. Certainly, desexing your male pet will, in general, make your pet more placid.
- Reduces sexual frustration of wanting to pursue a female on heat, but not being able to reach her.

Myths about desexing;

- A desexed pet will become fat: this is simply not true, no exercise and too much food will make your pet fat.
- Pets will lose their personality after desexing: Your pet will retain their character, the only change you may notice is they calm down a little.
- The operation is painful: there is some tenderness, but most pets have recovered fully in 24-48 hours.
- You should let your female have a litter first: there is no clinical evidence to support the view that this enhances her 'female' characteristics.
- I can't afford to desex my pet: desexing is relatively cheap and the cost associated with owning an entire pet is usually more than a desexed one.

In addition to all these reasons there is also the moral debate. Every year millions of pets are euthanased because there aren't enough homes for them.

Why Not Get Your Pet Desexed Now?!

The RSPCA is currently subsidising our routine desexing!

\$25 off male desexing

\$30 off female desexing

Please call the clinic on 5721 7177 to book you pet in!

Thankyou to the RSPCA for their wonderful support.

Household Toxins

There are many substances kept within and around houses that are toxic or poisonous to dogs and cats. Recently I have come across to that you may not know about, so I thought it would be handy to briefly mention them here.

Grape/Raisin Toxicity

This may sound strange, but the seemingly innocuous grape has proven to be deadly. About 6 years ago, two Jack Russell terriers developed kidney failure after eating large amounts of grapes. This prompted some research and it was found that there have been sporadic cases of toxicity associated with grapes and raisins in the past 10 years.

It is not known why some dogs develop renal failure after ingesting grapes or raisins and a trend has been difficult to establish. It seems that many dogs and cats eat grapes and show no signs whatsoever. It seems the toxic dose of grapes is 32g or grapes/kg of mass of the dog. The dose for raisins is 11-30g/kg.

What are the signs?

Vomiting and diarrhoea are common within a few hours of eating the grapes. Further symptoms may include weakness, increased drinking and abdominal pain. This can escalate to full blown renal failure which is life-threatening.

What is the treatment?

Your vet may make your dog vomit if they have ingested the grapes in the past 2- 4hours, otherwise activated charcoal will help to reduce the absorption of the toxin.

So if you think your dog or cat has consumed a large amount of grapes or raisins, please contact your vet for further advice.

Lily Toxicity in Cats

There have been recent studies to show that ingestion of different types of lilies can cause acute (immediate) renal failure in cats. Many cats will chew or swallow parts of the plant, all of which are poisonous- including flowers, stems, roots and leaves. The species of Lily include Tiger Lily, Easter Lily, Glory Lily, Asian Lillies, Peace Lillies, Rubrum and Stargazer Lily.

Cats are most affected by this poison, but dogs can also develop mild abdominal pain and diarrhoea. Cats will initially show signs of vomiting, anorexia and depression with 2-12 hours of ingestion. This then progresses to renal failure within 72 hours. If you realise that your cat has ingested part of a lily plant, contact your vet and they can induce vomiting and maintain renal perfusion.

Newsletters online

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If so, fill out the form below and drop it in to us at Warby Street.

Name:
(first name) (surname)

Postal Address:

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