

SPRING 2013



There are starting to be more and more foals on the ground and there has been a definite change in the weather after Winter decided to give August a decent nudge. Spring is in the air!

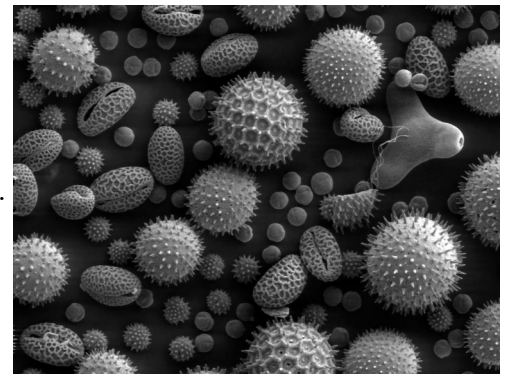
Spring Allergies

Spring has arrived and with the warm weather we see an explosion in the growth and flowering of many plants in our gardens. In humans we see “hay fever”, but dogs usually present their allergy to springtime antigens with skin disease. As Spring progresses we start to see lots of itchy dogs, many of which seem to present in the same way each Spring.

Skin itching can develop by two main mechanisms. The first is by a direct contact allergy. These usually affect the un-haired areas of skin on the belly, groin and armpits where they come into direct contact with a plant or grass that the dog is allergic to. The paws may also be affected where the dog has been walking on the grass. The second mechanism is called atopy. This involves a dog inhaling airborne antigens that then trigger inflammation in the skin. These dogs can have itching over their whole bodies. It is also common for them to develop superficial bacterial infections in the more humid skin covered areas such as the armpits, groin and ears where the inflammation caused by the allergy allows normal bacteria to overgrow out of their usual balance. These bacterial infections exacerbate the inflammation and become sore and annoying for the dog.

The gold standard for dealing with seasonal allergies is to identify what a dog is actually allergic to through intradermal skin testing. If these tests indicate plants that can be avoided then that is great news for the

patient. If however the list includes plants whose pollens will fill the air in your area each Spring then the condition needs to be managed rather than avoided. A veterinary dermatologist can help reduce allergies by formulating a course of injections that help to desensitise the dog to their allergies. Effectively this process dampens down the dog’s abnormal immune system overreaction to the items they are allergic to. In addition to this it is very important to control any infections that develop on the skin or in the ears using antibiotics. In some cases anti-histamine tablets are also used to help reduce the allergic response. It is preferable to use an anti-histamine to control symptoms of allergy rather than relying on cortisone. Cortisone is an anti-inflammatory often used (or overused) in dogs with atopy. It is obviously very effective at treating the symptoms of redness and itch, but also unfortunately can have many side effects especially when used for extended periods of time. Cortisone is best used as a cream or ear ointment that acts locally and doesn’t create whole body side effects. When necessary cortisone may be used in a tablet form, but this should be done sparingly and briefly.



An electron microscope picture of various pollen particles.



A bee collecting pollen

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A New Home for Myrtle

A young female tabby cat that was hit by a car on the Great Alpine Rd was presented to our clinic in early April. She was not microchipped and unfortunately many attempts and advertisements to locate her owners were unsuccessful. She had severe bruising around her back end from the accident and unfortunately also a fractured femur. Despite her injuries she was a very friendly cat and plans were set in place to help her recover and find a new home. She was also given a name, Myrtle, based on the vicinity in which she came to grief.

Myrtle was stabilised over several days, with pain relief and IV fluids and then underwent surgery where a pin was placed in her fractured femur to repair the break. She then required a period of 6-8 weeks of rest for her fracture to heal. At first she continued to present her loving personality while resting at the veterinary hospital. However, after several weeks of confinement she began to show her frustration at being cooped up in ways only an annoyed cat can. Despite her behaviour we all felt she was still a good girl at heart and one of our kind nurses volunteered to take Myrtle home for the remainder of her convalescence. Our hopes were soon realised and Myrtle settled in well in front of the wood fire and started making some cautious movements around the house in her new environment. Her friendly personality returned quickly.

After 8 weeks xrays showed that her fractured leg had healed sufficiently and the steel pin was removed. Unfortunately her temporary home could not become a permanent one due to interpersonal differences with the other resident feline. So the search began for a new place to live. Luckily a new home came up quickly through the veterinary nurse grapevine and Myrtle was delivered to our hospital ready to meet her new owner. A night in the vet hospital was again enough to let her tell us how much distaste she has for cage rest. However, the following day she met her new owner, or “staff” as cats often like to call them, and it was reported that she sat on his lap eating Twisties all the way to Melbourne. Perhaps not perfect nutrition, but a nice ending to the story nonetheless.

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!

NAME:

EMAIL ADDRESS:

“KING VALLEY RUN”

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

Glenrowan, Greta, Moyhu or Milawa.

“BEECHWORTH AND MYRTLEFORD RUN”

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

Markwood, Everton, Beechworth, Myrtleford

Pasture Bloat

With the coming of Spring we see rapid growth in pastures, which brings a smile to the farmer's face. However, sometimes there can be a situation where too much of a good thing brings problems and lush, green, rapidly growing grass may cause significant problems without correct management.

Pasture Bloat is a common outcome when cattle are turned out onto pasture dominated by rapidly growing young legumes such as clover and lucerne for the first time in a season. Bloat is a common cause of sudden death in cattle and symptoms can develop within an hour of grazing the pasture. The bloat occurs when there is rapid digestion of the leaf material in the rumen and the subsequent release of factors that inhibit gas bubbles from fermentation joining together. Ruminants rely on gas bubbles accumulating together and then rising in the rumen above the solid/liquid material in the rumen. These gases are then eructated (burped) out to prevent gas build up in the rumen. When bloat occurs the gas bubbles cannot join together and they form a foam in the rumen that further inhibits eructation. The result is gas build up and distension of the rumen, ie. Bloating. This can be seen in the initial stages as swelling in the left flank and discomfort (getting up and down or kicking at the flanks). As bloat progresses the swelling becomes obvious on the right hand side as well and the animal will start to have difficulty breathing, may have excessive drooling and eventually they will lie down and die.



Bloat is best avoided by gradual introduction of animals to rapidly growing pastures and especially not allowing hungry animals to gorge themselves. Feeding grass hay a few hours prior to placing the cattle on the offending pasture will help reduce their appetite. Strip grazing can also be employed to prevent excess intake of lush pasture. It is important to watch cattle after they are introduced into the rich pastures for any signs of bloat and remove them from the pasture if these signs develop. In dairy herds treatments can be used that prevent bloat, but these need to be given individually to each animal every day so are not practical in a beef herd. Younger animals are more prone to bloating because they don't moderate their intake of lush pastures to reduce their bloat causing effect. Older cattle tend to learn how much they can comfortably eat without getting too bloated. Using hay on an ongoing basis to reduce appetite and limit pasture consumption is very important, as is limiting the time that cattle can graze the rapidly growing pastures. Moving them onto a pasture for a few hours a day while monitoring them for bloat is one possible strategy, but is obviously quite labour intensive. Other strategies involve medicating cattle with anti-bloating agents on the hay or in their water supply. These can be effective, but often affect the palatability of the food/water and animals may avoid it all together if they can. Other treatments include bloat blocks that cattle lick and also capsules that can be inserted via the mouth to the rumen that provide ongoing bloat prevention for up to 100 days.

It is sometimes hard to predict the bloat causing potential of a pasture because of the variation in grazing strategies of individual animals and the fact that clover can be abundant in some areas of a paddock and scarce in others. As a rule of thumb pastures that are less than 30% clover will pose little risk, however some animals will purposely only eat the clover in such a paddock and may get bloat. Sometimes you just can't win! If you can use paddocks that have more mature grasses and clover in them as it is the young and rapidly growing clover plants that pose the greatest risk.

The Victorian DPI has a good fact sheet on bloat prevention on their website: <http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/animal-diseases/beef-and-dairy-cows/bloat-prevention-in-pasture-fed-beef-cattle>

Treatment of bloat involves releasing the gas from the rumen by puncturing it from the animal's left flank. In some cases this is very effective, but in others the foam that is stopping gas escaping through burping has trouble exiting the stabbed hole as well because of the impediment formed by the foam. Oral anti-bloat oils may also be used to try and break up the foam that forms in the rumen. Like most things it is better to prevent the bloat than try and deal with it after it occurs.

Equine Corneal Ulcers

Corneal ulcers in horses can range from simple, uninfected ulcers to vision/eye threatening corneal infections, and long term uveitis in the affected eye. A corneal ulcer is a defect in the corneal epithelium, which is the transparent outer layer of the eye. Sometimes this area can be visible with the naked eye, but often needs to be stained with a fluorescent dye to show the ulcerated area. A very inflamed cornea will look 'blue', which is due to oedema within the cornea.



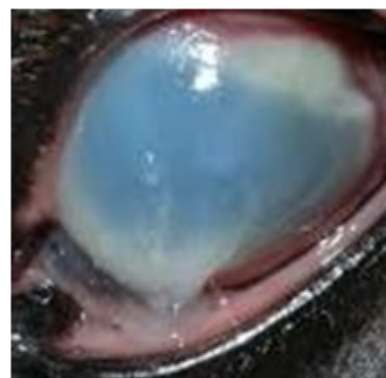
Fluorescein dye uptake of corneal ulcer

Prompt medical treatment should be given to horses with corneal ulceration to prevent infections and uveitis developing down the track. Treatment generally includes an antibiotic ointment or drops in the eye, an oral anti-inflammatory medication such as phenylbutazone or flunixin, and atropine drops. Atropine dilates the pupil, which is important in decreasing the pain in the eye, preventing uveitis, and preventing adhesions forming within the iris. The horse's own plasma is often applied to the eye in severe cases to help prevent/treat a melting cornea. Infected corneal ulcers may need cytology and microbiology performed to determine whether the infectious agent is bacterial or fungal. The cause of the ulcer is also

assessed and addressed. Sometimes they are caused by running into things, eyelashes rubbing on the cornea, sticks or dirt, and in summer grass seeds often lodge within the conjunctiva and create an ulcer. These are often not visible until the horse is sedated and the eye thoroughly explored.

Corneal ulcers are very painful, and a difficulty in treating them adequately is getting medication into the horse's eye. A horse with a painful eye can be head shy, and clamp down its eyelids very tight to protect the eye. This can make it VERY difficult if not impossible to get medication into the eye!

Horses that are not cooperative when attempting to put medication in their eyes may need a treatment tube placed. This tube has a small foot plate that sits in the corner of the eye and delivers medication, while allowing the owner to medicate the horse by injecting the drugs into a port that is attached to the mane.



Melting corneal ulcer

When complicated ulcers need medicating every 1-2hrs, this system is invaluable! Corneal ulcers can become infected and have devastating consequences to the eye in as little as 24hrs, it is imperative to seek Veterinary advice urgently.



Subpalpebral lavage system (treatment tube)