

Warby St Vet Hospital News

and Wangaratta Equine Hospital

The warm weather seems finally to be on its way after a refreshingly mild and rainy Spring. Time to start thinking about Christmas and Summer holidays.

Summer Edition 2010



Wangaratta Equine Hospital News

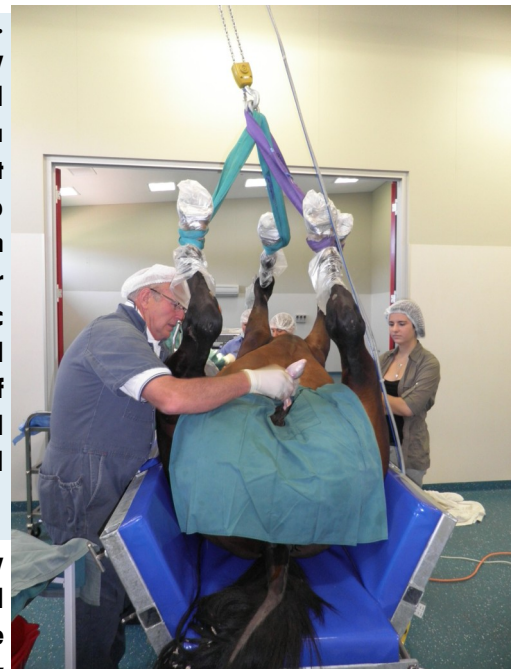
Work in the new Wangaratta Equine Hospital facility is now in full swing. Horses are regularly coming and going and the surgical tally is growing by the day. Recent surgeries have included umbilical hernia repairs, periosteal strips to straighten the legs of foals, the repair of a rectovaginal fistula following damage from foaling, laryngeal tieback for "roarers" and a jaw that was wired back together after a run in with a fence. We have been pleased to have the services of Dr Alastair McLean and Dr Anthony Dredge for the more in depth cases. Above all we have welcomed the better surgical environment for procedures that we have always performed ourselves. The anaesthetic induction, maintenance and recovery processes are much safer than in the field and the aseptic environment reduces the risk of infection and contamination of wounds. An electrically adjustable operating table and inhalational anaesthetic machine is a little better than crouching over a horse wedged between two hay bales and hanging the drip from a broom handle.

The hospital stable is also another string in our bow. It has given us the ability to offer better ongoing treatment of medical cases such as corneal ulcers and granulating lacerations. The regular opportunities for re-examination of these patients are far superior to the 30 minutes every few days that ambulatory services have offered in the past. In many cases the hospitalisation fee is actually cheaper than the travel that would be incurred for a repeat visit of an ongoing problem.

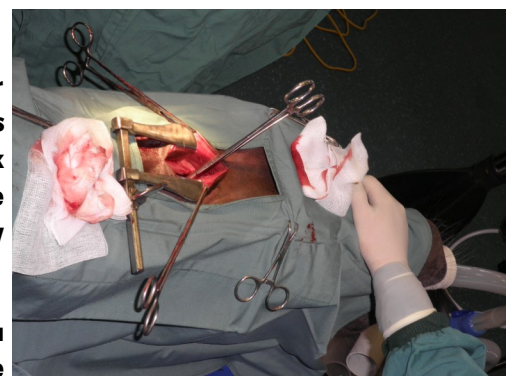
The thoroughbred foaling and breeding season has been a busy one this year with plenty of frisky youngsters in the paddocks around town. As the year draws to a close we look ahead to reproductive work in our other horse breeds and the ongoing care of all the foals as they try and grow into champions!

We will be beginning a dedicated Wangaratta Equine Hospital Newsletter shortly. If you would be interested in receiving this give the girls at the WEH a call on (03) 5722 3400 and provide them with an email address so we can forward it to you.

We would like to thank all our clients who have helped us get off to a flying start with the new venture. We look forward to working with you in the coming months and years as the list of equipment, services and facilities we are able to offer steadily grows. From all of us at the Wangaratta Equine Hospital and Warby St Veterinary Hospital we would like to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



A horse is hoisted onto the surgery table in preparation for gelding. Not a hay bale in sight!



Intraoperative view of laryngeal tieback surgery to correct laryngeal hemiplegia (roaring).

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What breed is that?

Have you ever wondered whether your crossbred dog is half Labrador and half Kelpie? Or maybe it's half Jack Russell and half Chihuahua? Well now with advances in DNA testing and progress on mapping the canine genome the answer is only a simple test away.

The test has been appropriately dubbed "BITSA" as an acronym of Breed Identification through Scientific Analysis. However, there is a clear allusion to the Australian slang for our loveable crossbred dogs. To perform the test we need to collect a cheek swab from your dog. This is a simple and relatively non invasive procedure that involves swirling a cotton tipped swab on the inside of the dog's cheek. It is important that your dog hasn't eaten in the few hours before the test as the DNA in meat can affect the test (we wouldn't want to report that your dog is partly Hereford!).

If you are interested in this test please let us know. For us to perform the test there is a consulting fee of \$49.50 and a testing fee of \$190. During the consultation we can address any other health issues your dog may have. Alternately the test can be added on to a vaccination or routine surgical procedure for the \$190 testing fee alone.

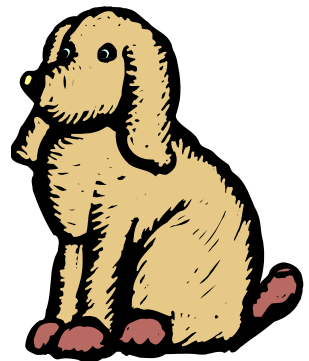


Passive Smoking and Pets

The risks of passive smoking in humans are well documented scientifically and these risks have led to legislative changes regarding smoking in indoor public places. What you may not realise is that our pets are also susceptible to health issues due to cigarette smoke exposure. In fact they are actually more sensitive to second hand smoke than we are. The most common problem that we see is an ongoing dry cough that represents a chronic inflammatory airway disease in the lungs of the pet. The nature of the cough is actually very similar to the classic "smoker's cough" that some smokers tend to have. The best way to help these pets is obviously not to smoke around them. Whether this means heading outside to smoke where there is ventilation or giving up all together we'll leave entirely up to you. Smoking regularly indoors with your cat or dog in there with you is exposing them to potential health risks.



It is interesting to note that there are also other things in our homes that can affect our pet's lungs. Classic examples of this are air fresheners and repetitive use of insect sprays such as the new products that plug into the wall and emit a dose of fly spray or deodorant every few minutes.



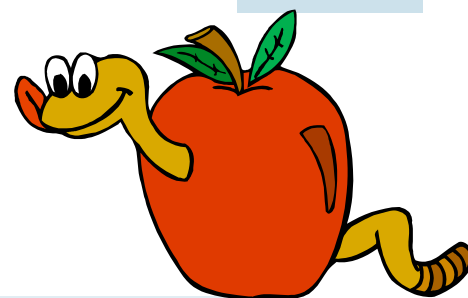
"King Valley Run"

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

Intestinal Worm Control in Horses



Intestinal parasites are one of the most common problems affecting horses. Every horse should have a regular drenching regime to keep them free of internal parasites. This will improve their wellbeing, stamina and appearance. It will also save you money on feed as there are no parasites fighting for a slice of the nutrients being taken in by the horse.

There are four main groups of worms in the horse:

Red Worms: These are the most common and serious internal parasite of the horse (also called Strongyles). They live in the large intestine and feed on blood, which causes anemia (evident as pale gums), diarrhoea and reduced nutrient absorption. This may present as general lethargy, poor fitness and poor coat. The worst of these worms is *Strongylus vulgaris* whose larvae can burrow their way out of the intestines and through the blood vessels supplying the gut. This can present as severe colic or in the worst cases sudden death from blood loss.

Roundworms: These are large worms that live in the small intestine. They are not blood sucking worms. They generally affect young foals who have been infected from their mothers. If foals have a large enough burden they may exhibit weakness, lethargy and poor growth. Large numbers of these worms have been known to block the intestinal tract of foals causing severe abdominal pain.

Pin Worms: These worms live in the large intestine and crawl outside at night where they lay their eggs around the anus. They cause irritation to the area and the horse will rub its tail and backside to try and ease the itch.

Horses can also be infected by Bots. These are not worms, but the larvae of flies. The fly lays eggs on the horse's coat, which are hatched when the horse rubs at the itchy area with its lips. The larvae then invade the mucosa of the mouth and work their way into the stomach. Horses can have severe infestations of stomach bots that cause pain and damage to the stomach lining or obstruct the passage of food. In very bad cases death may result.

Tapeworms: Tapeworms rarely cause damage or problems for a horse. If you choose a drench that contains Praziquantel as an added active ingredient this should effectively control tapeworms.

Worming treatments by either pastes or stomach tube should be given regularly. Not all worm treatments are effective against all worm species and some do not kill the immature worm larvae. Added to this using the same worm treatment over and over can lead to the development of resistance to the chemical. Rotation or alternation of worm drenches is recommended. The current thinking on drench rotation is called "Slow Rotation". This recommends using one class of worm drench for one year then changing to another the following year. In Australia drenches tend to contain either an -ectin or an -azole based compound. It is important to look at the active ingredient, especially when rotating drenches. A different brand doesn't necessarily mean a different active ingredient. When in a year using the -azole based drenches you should include an -ectin based drench at the end of Autumn and the beginning of Spring as the -azole drenches do not kill bot fly larvae.

One approach to worming is to base your treatments on a fecal egg count and worm identification. A fecal sample can be sent to the lab where the types and number of worm eggs is counted. This gives an idea of the size of the worm burden the horse is carrying as well as what types of worms the horse has. From this information a veterinarian can advise whether drenching is necessary and also recommend the type of drench to use.

The frequency and timing of drench use depends a lot on the way horses are kept and their age.

Horses in large paddocks usually require less frequent drenching because fecal contamination of pastures is spread over a large area. These horses should be wormed every 3 months. Drenching at the change of season is a good way of remembering. All horses in one "mob" should be wormed at the same time and ideally then moved onto a "clean" pasture that has been free of horses for several months. Worms tend to be specific to their hosts so alternating horses and sheep/cattle in a paddock is one way of creating relatively clean pastures. Spelling pastures over the summer is the most effective time as the heat will help kill worm eggs and larvae in the grass. You should try and separate weanlings and yearlings from adult horses and give the younger animals the benefit of the cleanest pastures after each worm drench.

Horses in stables and small yards should have their manure picked up regularly to prevent contamination of the straw/ground and any feeders should be raised off the ground to prevent oral exposure to worm eggs and larvae. These horses should be wormed every 6-8 weeks with a rotation of drenches recommended.

Foals should begin their worming regime at 6-8 weeks of age and continue with treatments every 6 weeks until they are 2 years old. Young horses are the ones most susceptible to and most affected by worm burdens. It is a good idea to use a worm preparation in foals that combines several active ingredients, such as Equimax Elevation (Ivermectin, Praziquantel and Pyrantel). This will help kill resistant roundworms more effectively. Pregnant mares should continue their normal worming regime during pregnancy with a product registered for use in pregnant mares. They should be wormed 2 weeks prior to their expected foaling date and again at 6 weeks after foaling when their foal starts on worming treatment.

Pink Eye in Cattle



Pink Eye is a common problem in cattle herds during the Australian Summer and early Autumn. It is caused by a bacteria named *Moraxella bovis*, which is spread from an infected eye to an uninfected eye by flies. It is particularly troublesome in hot and dry conditions as dust irritates eyes and makes them more susceptible to infection. Pink eye can occur in large outbreaks when cattle are yarded in dusty conditions because you have a large group in a small space making flyborne transmission very easy. The bacteria colonises the eye and produces a toxin that causes conjunctivitis and an erosive keratitis (inflammation and damage to the surface of the eyeball). This inflammation is painful and can reduce grazing time or milk production. It is therefore a major impact on productivity in the herd and as a result a disease of economic importance to farmers. In many cases the disease causes temporary blindness, which may become permanent if it is not treated effectively.

A cow with pink eye initially develops a red, swollen and half closed eye. This proceeds to full closure of the eye and a mucky discharge. If left to worsen a divot (ulcer) will form in the surface of the eye and in severe cases the eye may even rupture. The discharge attracts flies and therefore makes this disease one that is very efficient at spreading itself around. With treatment or less severe strains the eye becomes less inflamed, the discharge dries up and the cow develops a bluish or white scar on the surface of the eyeball. This scar often fades away with time. One or both eyes may be infected.

It is important to note that the other major problem for cattle eyes at this time of year is grass seeds. Grass seeds in the eye will look very similar to pink eye, but will generally affect only a few animals and more often than not only one eye. It is essential to check for and remove grass seeds to diagnose and treat either problem effectively. Irritation from grass seeds will actually make the cow more susceptible to Pink Eye infection if they are exposed to it.

Treatment of Pink Eye is usually effective. It involves the use of an antibiotic eye ointment containing Cloxacillin (eg. Orbenin or Opticlox eye ointments). The ointment should be applied under the upper and lower eyelids if possible. One quarter to a third of a tube should be used at a time and a single treatment should be effective for 48 hours. There is no withholding period on the use of cloxacillin in the eye. If treated early enough a single dose of ointment is usually effective. Worse cases may require repeat treatments every 2 days until they resolve. A long acting oxytetracycline injection may also help (eg. Bivatop or Alamycin). The main issue with treatment is that it requires yarding the animals which increases the risk of spread to others in the herd. If possible it is best to yard only small numbers of animals at a time.

This brings us to the familiar adage of “prevention is better than cure”. Taking steps to avoid the conditions where pink eye spreads easily is the first place to start. You should avoid yarding cattle in large numbers in hot, dry and dusty weather. If it is necessary you should consider wetting down the yards first to reduce dust and muster early in the morning to avoid the worst of the flies. In some cases it is better to risk blindness in a few animals than yard the entire herd and have Pink Eye spread to large numbers. A constant eye out for animals with red or discharging eyes and prompt examination and treatment are the next measure in controlling spread. As mentioned above trying to get the affected animals into the yards in a small group should be the goal. It is then a good idea to keep these animals segregated from the herd while they recover. Finally a vaccination program can greatly reduce the problem of pink eye in the herd. Coopers make the Piliguard vaccine (www.pinkeye.com.au) which is given 3-6 weeks prior to the expected pink eye season. With our current mild and wetter weather, vaccinating now would be a great idea.

NEWSLETTERS ONLINE

If you would like to receive our newsletters in your email please fill out this slip and return it to us at the hospital. Alternately you may email me at tim@warbyvet.com.au and I will add you to the mailing list.

Name:

Email address: