

AUTUMN 2016

Autumn, or more like an Indian Summer is in full swing. Hopefully some rain is on the horizon for everyone.

## Premature Ulna Growth Plate Closure in Puppies

### Ulna growth plate fractures in puppies

The long bones of young puppies grow rapidly from areas at their ends called growth plates. Unfortunately these areas are also quite fragile and can be damaged by trauma. In areas where the limbs are made up of just one bone (such as the femur in the thigh or the humerus in the upper arm) the impact is a slightly shortened bone. As dogs stand with quite a bent leg they can easily adjust to having one limb slightly shorter than the others. In addition most of the long bones have multiple growth plates and if one is disrupted then the others can pick up the slack. Where a major problem arises is in the forelimb of the dog where the paired radius and ulna bones reside. The ulna's lower growth plate accounts for over 70% of the growth of the ulna and its conical shape means it is easily damaged. If this growth plate is damaged then the ulna stops growing, but the radius continues to grow as normal. You can picture the problem that arises as looking like a bow and arrow. The short ulna is the string and the longer radius becomes bowed as it grows because the ends are still constrained to the top and bottom of the ulna at the elbow and wrist. This abnormal growth distorts the appearance of the leg and also distorts the wrist and elbow joints. The resultant joint disruption then leads to poor function of the joints and early onset of arthritis and lameness.



Xrays showing bowing of the radius due to premature closure of the distal ulna growth plate and resultant shortness of the ulna.

The key to correcting this issue is recognising that a problem has occurred early on. If a pup is in an accident and starts limping on a front leg damage to the growth plates should always be considered. Your veterinarian will be able to help assess and monitor the growth of the legs and then suggest an operation if required. If detected early the ulna can be cut and a graft of fat placed between its ends to delay it from healing. This allows the radius to continue its growth and the ulna will bridge the gap with time. Luckily the radius bears most of the weight and a pup can handle having an ulna with a gap for a while. If the problem is not detected until late in the piece then much more complex surgery to cut and straighten the leg is required for a favourable outcome.

Tim Craig BVSc  
Warby St Veterinary Hospital

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## Preventative Dental Scaling in Pets

Over the last 6 months we have been busy training our nursing staff the techniques of dental scaling and polishing in dogs and cats. In much the same way as a dental hygienist performs these more routine procedures at the human dentist our nurses now perform these tasks at our veterinary hospital. The benefit to our clients is a greatly reduced cost to have your cat or dog’s teeth scaled and polished. In the past a routine scale and polish performed under anaesthesia by our vets would have cost between \$350-400. With the nurses performing these procedures the cost has been nearly halved to \$199-249. The general anaesthetics and pre-anaesthetic checks are still administered by our veterinarians.

Dental disease is a major issue in companion animals and the prevention is better than cure theme again holds true here. Cleaning your pet’s teeth before they develop any more advanced dental disease helps them retain their full complement of teeth for the long term. We hope that these reduced prices will allow more owners to afford preventative dental care rather than reactive dental care when the damage has been done and the only solution is pulling the teeth out.

Our aim is to intervene when the teeth look like the picture on the left so as to avoid things deteriorating over time such that they look like the picture on the right. Better dental health, better breath and better quality of life for our pets.



GRADE 2 DENTAL DISEASE



GRADE 4 DENTAL DISEASE

## 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](mailto: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

## Strangles

### STRANGLES - Is your horse vaccinated?

Dr. Kirri Solly Slade DVM

In recent months we have been seeing the occurrence of a significant number of strangles cases in the North East of Victoria.

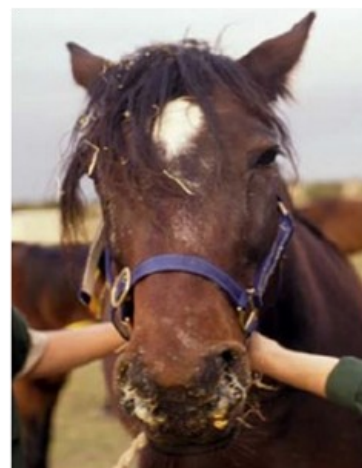
Strangles is a bacterial disease of the upper respiratory tract in horses and is caused by the organism *Streptococcus equi* subspecies *equi*. Strangles is highly contagious and can be rapidly spread between animals via nasal discharges that come into contact with the nose or mouth by direct contact or via contaminated equipment such as head collars, buckets or tack. People can also serve as a means of spreading the disease between horses by carrying discharges on their clothing.

The disease causes a multitude of clinical signs including an extreme fever, lethargy, a thick nasal discharge and enlarged lymph nodes beneath the jaw. Sometimes the lymph nodes can form an abscess and often they impede on the upper respiratory tract causing increased noise during breathing. This strangling effect by swollen lymph nodes is where the disease gained its name

If you have movement of horses on and off your property than your horses are at risk of contracting strangles. The risk of contracting strangles can be reduced by vaccination either alone or in combination with the tetanus vaccine. The initial course of the strangles vaccine is 3 inoculations at 2 weekly intervals and follow up vaccination is yearly. In very high risk situations boosters of the Strangles vaccination may be given every 6 months instead of yearly. Tetanus, Strangles and 2 in 1 vaccines are available for over the counter purchase at the Wangaratta Equine Hospital and Warby St Veterinary Hospital. Vaccinations should only be given when your horse is in good health, and must be given by injection into the muscle.

Other measures that can be taken in order to try and reduce the spread of strangles is to have designated equipment for individual horses and to implement quarantine periods of isolation for any horses coming onto your property. If you have any questions about strangles or how to prevent it or if you have any concerns that your horse might be infected please do not hesitate to contact your veterinarian.

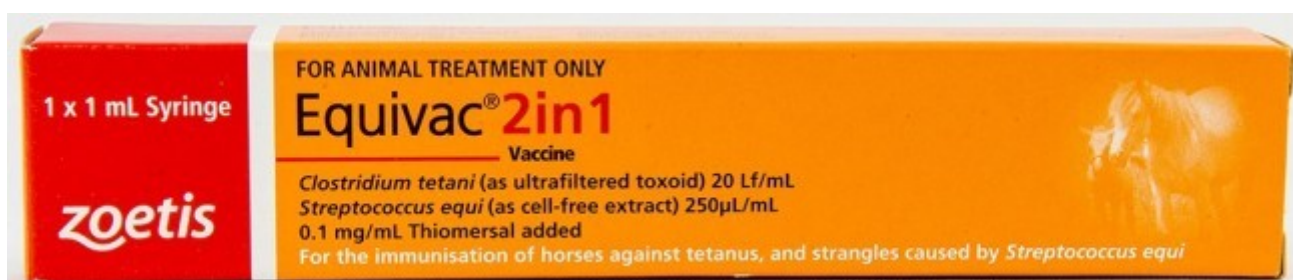
You may also be interested in joining the Health for Horses web register that keeps a track of all your horse's vaccinations and will send you reminders when vaccination boosters are due. The web address is [www.health4horses.com.au](http://www.health4horses.com.au)



Typical yellow nasal discharge seen with Strangles

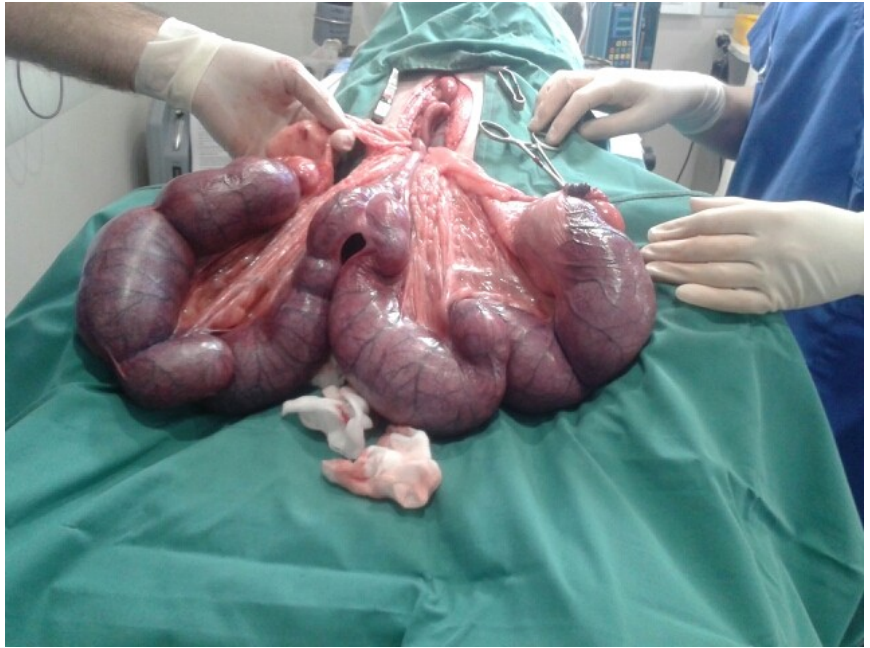


Pus draining from an abscessed lymph node under the jaw



## Pyometra in Undesexed Female Dogs

We seem to be having a run on pyometra cases at the moment with one presently turning up at the hospital each week. This is a disease of undesexed female dogs and its name is quite descriptive in that “pyo” refers to pus and “metra” refers to the uterus. So as you might imagine a pyometra case is a uterine infection with much pus accumulation. These typically occur in mid to older aged undesexed females and usually develop 1-2 months after the dog has been in heat. During the reproductive cycle the lining of the uterus becomes moist and swollen which is a perfect environment for bacterial growth. If bacteria are able to ascend from the lower reproductive tract a uterine infection ensues. The amount of pus that can accumulate in the uterus is quite staggering with one recent case seeing us remove a uterus filled with nearly 7kg of pus!



View of a greatly distended uterus during surgery.

Pyometras can be further classified as closed or open depending on whether the cervix is allowing drainage or not. The cervix forms a barrier between the uterus and the lower reproductive tract. If it is open the owners usually report a yellow pusy discharge from the vulva and the dog doesn't seem to be that unwell. In a closed pyometra no drainage is possible so no discharge is seen. As the pus is trapped inside these patients tend to become septic (bacteria in the bloodstream) and are often much sicker. In severe cases without treatment death is possible. Dogs will often be picky with their appetite and show varying levels of lethargy. Bloating of the abdomen may be seen where pus accumulation is large. In many cases components of the bacteria involved in the infection (*E. Coli*) find their way into the bloodstream and cause disruption of the kidneys. In these patients an insatiable thirst along with frequent large volume urination is often witnessed. In most cases this resolves with successful treatment.

The best treatment for pyometra is stabilisation followed by surgery to remove the ovaries and uterus. This removes the large volume of pus from the body in one piece and dogs usually recover very rapidly. Some protocols exist for medical management, but their success is not guaranteed and they are often quite tough on the patient. Surgical intervention is recommended in all but valuable breeding animals.

As is often the case prevention is better than cure. This condition cannot occur in desexed animals as they have no uterus to become infected and they do not come into season. Speying a female dog usually costs around \$250-\$350 when it is done as a routine procedure, whereas the cost of stabilising and operating on a sick dog with a large pyometra may cost between \$1000 and \$2000. Many female dogs are desexed at a young age and never have the risk of this disease. However, some dogs have a litter or two of puppies and then never get desexed. The main message in this case is that it isn't really ever too late to have a female dog desexed. Having the operation at 7 or 8 years of age is still common and recommended to help prevent serious diseases such as pyometra, as well as helping to prevent unwanted pregnancies in an aging dog. In many cases as dogs get older their reproductive cycles can become irregular and this often puts them at much higher risk of developing a pyometra infection.