



Straight from the horses mouth

Issue 6

Winter 2008

Beacon Hill Equine Centre

We are pleased to announce the completion of Town & Country Vet's new equine facility at Beacon Hill Farm, Patons Road, near Richmond. The facility incorporates purpose built examination stocks (see picture) to improve efficiency and safety for both horses and people. This will be great for our increasing reproduction and dental caseload.

The stocks are housed in the old historic barn at Beacon Hill — and has a non slip concrete floor with running water and power. There is a foal pen for mares with foals at foot and a large examination area for minor surgery, lameness work, ultra-sonography and radiography.

There are some holding yards outside, lots of paddock space and plenty of room to leave horse floats. This makes it easy to drop horses off for treatments, scans or dentals while doing some shopping in town.

We plan on having two DENTAL DAYS a month at the facility where horses are booked in for dental work. These will be discounted by 10% and have no mileage charge.



Jenny Tyler and 'Esky' - our very first equine dental in the new stocks at Beacon Hill

Equine Dentistry

Time is ticking along and we have done **performance and geriatric dentals** on several hundred horses now. This has given us some insight to the types of dental problems encountered in our local horse population. We now know the responses seen with quality dental work in our horses and how frequently dentals need to be repeated to ensure optimum comfort during work and when eating.

As previously mentioned teeth continually erupt from the equine skull at about 2-4mm per year—sometimes even faster. This means that even in the ideal mouth the simplest of procedures, like taking off the sharp enamel points, will need repeating each year especially in younger horses.

This procedure will reduce packing of food, reduce the risk of periodontal disease and allow the horse to respond more easily to mouth gear.

We usually identify periodontal disease when doing our routine dentals with the mirror and pick... one of the reasons a detailed exam is important. The smell is characteristic and, unfortunately for you, we usually get you to smell this and once you have you won't forget that smell !!!

Periodontal disease causes damage to the periodontal ligament and bone loss around the reserve crown and root. This will cause tooth loosening and create severe discomfort leading ultimately to tooth loss.

Not only that but before this occurs there is a bacterial shower that occurs during eating which can cause systemic disease. We have had to remove a tooth from a 4 yr old with advanced disease so its not just limited to old horses!!

Poor Performance

Now with the main show season over we have a breathing space to investigate poor performance in our trusty steeds. Were they performing up to expectations??

Subtle changes in behaviour such as reluctance to go forward, ears back, or not having the usual zest or enthusiasm for competition can indicate discomfort somewhere. Some other indicators that something is just not right are taking longer to warm up, knocking rails, uncharacteristic stopping at fences, poor transitions or feeling uneven when ridden.

Remember that when investigating reasons for poor performance, musculoskeletal disease accounts for 90% of identified causes and by far the majority of these end up being carpus [knee] and below in the front end or hock and below in the back end.

Whilst its easy to take the 'quick fix' or 'turn it out' approach, rarely do we get to the bottom of the underlying cause of this discomfort with this action. In fact when the horse comes under training pressure in the new season the old problem will raise its ugly head again.

Some problems are diagnosed relatively easily and others are never identified but it is important to follow a methodical approach to give the best chance of identifying the underlying cause of discomfort so that the best treatment plan can be considered.

Even the top overseas Olympic vets make no assumptions and work with a methodical approachusually from the foot up!

Pre-Purchase Examinations

We regularly get contracted to do pre purchase examinations for buyers from out of the district which is done to a standard protocol endorsed by the NZ Equine Branch of the NZ Veterinary Association. Most of the time these horses belong to clients of ours.

The legal advisors to the equine branch of NZVA strongly advise that equine veterinarians do not undertake pre purchase exams IF the horse belongs to an active client due to CONFLICT OF INTEREST.

Unfortunately we have also found that unnecessary pressure is placed on both ourselves and clients therefore our practice can no longer do pre purchase exams if the horse for sale belongs to one of our active clients.

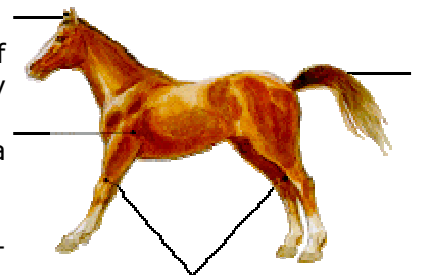
If the horse to be purchased does NOT belong to an active client we are only too happy to undertake a pre pur-

Tetanus

Once again we need to bring it to your attention that tetanus is around and if your horse gets it they will very likely need to be euthanased. Remember they are the most susceptible of all animal species.

We don't want another case of a horse contracting tetanus before we get a rush on vaccinations.

There is no excuse for horses contracting tetanus as the vaccine is highly protective. All horses should be immunized against tetanus. This involves an initial sensitizing vaccination, followed by a booster four to six weeks later. It is recommended that an annual booster be given after the initial sensitizing dose, after which immunization should be boosted at three yearly intervals.



Equine First Aid Kits

Our Equine first aid kits are great value and a must have for any horse owner. Come and have a look you never know when you may need one.