

ESPINAR EQUINE

Summer 2019



Welcome to our Summer Newsletter!

With the bright sunny days and long balmy evenings, summer is a fantastic time to get out in the fresh air with your horse and enjoy life!

PRACTICE NEWS

Over the past few months I have had the opportunity to deal with some very interesting cases of lameness; being able to provide some of the cases for the International Society of Equine Locomotor Pathology. Every horse is different - no case is exactly the same as another which makes it more challenging. We never stop learning!

HOT AND COLD

After working out in the sunshine, what's the best way to cool a horse down after exercise? The 4 main ways that heat dissipates are by radiation (heat between 2 objects that aren't touching), conduction (heat transfer between two objects that are touching), convection (cold air moving across the skin, which forces heat away from the body), and evaporation (liquid i.e. sweat that vaporises, thereby dispersing the heat energy). Sweating is not an effective method in humid conditions, however.



Research has shown that the most effective way to cool a horse down is by spraying with cool water, then scraping that water off, before spraying again. Despite rumours about hot horses drinking and getting colic, research also shows that horses can be offered cool (not ice-cold) water, as rehydration is most important.



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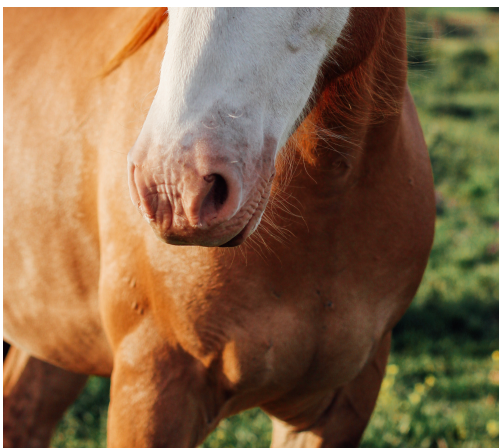
If you are going to travel to a hotter country for competitions, beware that horses take some time to adapt to the change in temperature and be aware to work them at the right time; during the coolest part of the day. Cooling them down quickly after exercise is very important for good recovery as well.



PHOTOSENSITIVITY

Photosensitivity is defined clinically as an exaggerated response to UV light and encompasses various conditions caused or aggravated by exposure to sunlight. Primary photosensitivity is caused by a reaction, i.e. from overexposure (sunburn) or in other cases usually from being exposed to chemicals for example in some fly sprays, taking certain medications or eating some plants such as Clover and St John's Wort).

Secondary photosensitivity (often referred to as hepatogenous photosensitization) occurs when liver damage allows the photosensitizing substance phylloerythrin (produced by plants during photosynthesis) to accumulate in the body. It reacts with UV light on the skin, forming free radicals that then damage the skin, leading to ulceration, necrosis, and sloughing.



Photodermatitis is commonly found on un-pigmented skin (for example, pink noses or white markings on the legs). Signs to watch out for include scratching or itching the area, peeling skin, swelling, redness, crusts or scabs - remember that these sores can be very painful and flies can also aggravate them. Secondary infection of these sores is also a risk, so its not always simply a matter of applying sunscreen and hoping it will go away! Therefore it is often best to call the vet as antibiotics may be required.

EYES AND FLIES

Warmer weather unfortunately can mean more pesky flies, and they can often irritate horses' eyes. You may notice that your horse has swollen eyes, discharge (from one or both eyes), that the conjunctiva (the membranes or pink tissues surrounding the eye) are red, or that the white of the horse's eye (sclera) may also have more small blood vessels showing.

Using fly masks can prevent flies from irritating the eyes and in some cases antibiotics or steroids, or a combination of the two, may be used to combat symptoms. Steroids are used to reduce inflammation and antibiotics deal with any bacterial infection.

Corneal ulcers can also develop if the horse rubs or scratches the eyes on either its legs or another surface; again, prompt veterinary attention may be required to assess and treat the problem, reducing the risk of any further issues.



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HANDLING HARD HOOVES

At this time of year, hooves can easily bruise on dry, hard ground. As living, flexible tissue, hooves are designed to expand and contract, withstanding concussion, but too much force from an impact can cause damage. Also the hard ground can affect the biomechanics of ligaments, joints and tendons, and some horses with certain problems (navicular and arthritis for example), could simply get worse.



Bruises are small haemorrhages that occur when blood vessels rupture due to trauma. Similar to humans having a blood-filled blister (haematoma) under the fingernail, larger haematomas can also form between sensitive tissues and the sole of the hoof, which can be very painful! Symptoms can range from increased digital pulse, shortened stride or more obvious lameness, as well as purple/red marks on the hoof.

Concussive laminitis is also a concern; the laminae can be damaged through excessive shock, which can lead to structural collapse. Jumping or galloping on hard ground in the summer can be a trigger, as can doing long distances with unfit horses. Remember that compacted earth can still be very hard, so even though avoiding riding on tarmac may be beneficial in some cases, this condition can still occur in horses worked on grass or dry dirt tracks for example.

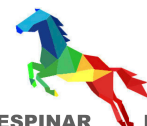
Horses that have poor hoof quality, or long toes and low heels (like Thoroughbreds) can be predisposed. Any mediolateral imbalance of the hooves (difference in length between the inner and outer sides of the hoof) can also play a part, because of imbalances when shock forces are transferred from the ground to the horse's leg. Regular correct trimming and shoeing can help, and if you are concerned there are any bony changes then we can take x-rays, which are often useful in enabling us to provide the best long-term treatment or management plan.

Whatever your plans include, from beach rides, exotic holidays or simply staying at home and relaxing in the sunshine, enjoy the rest of the summer with your horses!

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