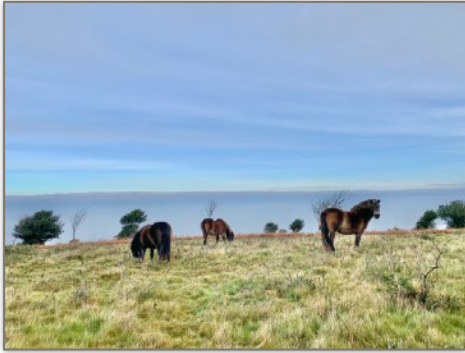


White Lodge Equine Clinic

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Welcome to our Spring Newsletter!



With an unusually mild winter so far, we've benefitted from relatively little mud and cold related issues! However without a prolonged cold period, we may see high numbers of various parasites causing issues in 2022, as many parasite numbers are usually limited by a cold snap killing most of them off!

Our new scales have been used well, and are proving very useful to ensure accurate medicine dosages and advising owners on weight management!

Guess the weight of the 14.3hh horse in the picture!
Answer at the bottom of the second page!



TICKS

Exmoor and the surrounding areas are notorious for our high tick populations! Ticks will latch on to any part of a horse they can reach, often being found around the legs and head. They will cause a local reaction and swelling, but can also pass on diseases that often cause significant illness - generally referred to as 'Tick Fever'. Most of the horses from "round 'ere" have some immunity to tick fevers, but can still get ill. However the highest risk is to those horses which move into the area, and have never been exposed to the diseases before.

Common signs include: lack of appetite, lethargy, high temperature, and affected animals can also become unsteady on their legs.

There are no licensed products for tick prevention in horses, however there are various treatments that we can advise on for individual animals badly affected by ticks. Speak to one of our vets for more information if you have any concerns. Reducing tick populations is also key to management, ticks are found mainly in areas with humidity >80%, woodland, rough hill grazing, hedges around pasture, and poorly-drained low-lying land. There is anecdotal evidence that guinea-fowl can also eat thousands of ticks per day if you're looking for some extra help!



Some ticks can be almost impossible to see under a horse's coat!

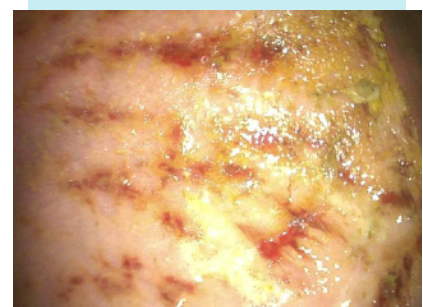
Gastroscopy - Book in now!

Does your horse hate having his girth done up? Is he losing weight or not performing like his usual self? This may be down to gastric ulcers!

As many as 1 in 3 horses are suspected to have the condition, which is due to 'splash back' from the acid in the stomach causing inflammation and ulceration to the lining of the stomach. We diagnose ulcers by gastroscopy, a camera that goes down into the stomach so that we can see if any ulcers are present and grade them accordingly.

Treatment varies depending on severity and location of ulcers, but normally includes the use of a drug called omeprazole and management changes.

Please contact the office for availability and to book your horse in!



Ulcers in the stomach of a horse

Focus on: SWEET ITCH

Sweet itch is an allergic reaction to the saliva in midge bites which leads to your horse or pony feeling itchy. It is the most common allergic skin condition in horses and can be seen in all breeds and types, however some breeds, such as native ponies, Belgian warmbloods and Icelandic horses, have been found to be at an increased risk of developing sweet itch. Horses are commonly affected between March and November as this is when the midges that cause sweet itch are most active.

Signs of sweet itch

As with many conditions, early diagnosis and treatment of sweet itch usually gives a better chance of being able to manage it and so it is important to know the signs to look out for. Signs of sweet itch are most commonly seen at the base of the mane and tail and on the face, however the withers, back, belly and rump can also be affected. The itching can result in hair loss and in some cases secondary wounds or skin infections.

Signs to look out for include:

- Itching – scratching on posts, fencing, stable doors, trees, etc
- Intense tail swishing
- Excessive rolling and scratching with hind hooves
- Areas of hair loss/baldness
- Inflamed, crusty, sore or broken skin
- Change in behaviour – more lethargic, agitated or restless than normal
- Lack of concentration when ridden
- Prevention and treatment

The main cornerstone to treating sweet itch is prevention.

This involves measures to stop the midges being able to bite your horse or pony.

- Avoiding turning out during dawn and dusk – this is when the midges are most active
- Avoiding areas of stagnant water as this is where female midges lay their eggs
- Using sweet itch rugs
- Using fly repellents
- Using midge screens over stable doors and windows to prevent midges entering
- Using insecticidal sprays in the stable or even installing fans to reduce the number of midges present
- There is a vaccine for ringworm in horses that has good anecdotal evidence in reducing the severity of sweet itch



In some individuals it may be necessary to stop the cycle of itching and there are a number of different medications and treatments that can help achieve this. If you suspect your horse or pony is suffering from sweet itch, please contact us so that we can talk through all the treatment options available and find one that will suit you!

TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR MELANOMAS

Melanomas are common tumours in horses, mainly affecting mature grey horses, but can affect horses of any colour or age. Melanomas are often found under the tail and around the head, but can be found anywhere. They normally cause problems by spreading, becoming very large, and can easily become ulcerated and infected if left untreated. Melanomas can spread to internal organs, but this is uncommon.

The best treatment option for these tumours is surgical removal where possible, and this can usually be performed under standing sedation. There is also a vaccine licensed for melanoma in dogs that has been used with some good effects in horses, and your vet can advise whether this would be appropriate in individual cases.



Routine Sports Horse Examinations

The majority of our sports horses undergo a rigorous 5 stage vetting at the time of purchase, identifying any abnormalities in soundness, gait, and assessing their overall condition and suitability for use.

Very often the horse is not re-assessed by a vet for several years, often only when a lameness or poor performance issue arises.

More recently equine vets have become more pro-active, routinely checking sports horses pre-season, mid season and at the end of their competition season to pick up any minor lamenesses or niggles early, keep them performing to the best of their ability and plan suitable fitness regimes, nutrition, shoeing, physio and breaks when necessary.

By working together with horse owners and riders in this way we hope to keep horses performing at their top level, having long, successful careers.

What sort of things do we detect at a Sports Horse examination?

Low grade front foot lameness - this often affects both front feet, and in many cases is not detectable on a straight line but becomes evident on the lunge on a firm surface. Front foot pain will result in a shorter stride length, stiffness on turns, reduced willingness to go forward and sometimes a reluctance to land from jumps or drop fences. In many cases by working with the farrier, and sometimes medicating the horse, we can ensure the horse is better supported and more comfortable to perform, without the horse missing competitions by becoming obviously lame. Early correction of foot imbalance can prevent long term issues such as navicular degeneration and chronic heel pain which are a lot more challenging to resolve, and may be career ending for some horses.

Hock Pain is a common cause of underperformance in middle aged sports horses (generally over 8 years). In many cases the horse is not obviously lame, but can have an altered gait, or finds it harder to engage the hind limbs and "push" from behind. Often this is more evident on one rein than the other, so a horse that has previously found a lateral movement easy may struggle to perform it on one rein, or he may jump to one side, or struggle to push off from a deep stride in front of a fence. Often diagnosing and medicating these horses can make a real difference to their performance.



Back / Neck / Sacroiliac pain - Some horses are more prone to developing back pain due to their conformation or posture. Often by planning a suitable work programme, sometimes combined with medication of the back or sacroiliac joints, we can work together to improve core

strength, improve posture and alleviate pain. Sometimes the signs that horses show with back pain are difficult to distinguish from other ailments such as gastric ulceration or hind limb suspensory ligament pain, requiring a thorough investigation to find out what is really causing the issue. Back pain can also be secondary to low grade hindlimb lameness. With a thorough examination and evaluation of posture and gait it enables us to work together with the rider, physio and farrier to make the best plan to help the horse perform at its best.

The other huge benefit of having your horse regularly assessed is that the vet gets a good feel for the posture, gait and demeanour of the horse when he is performing well. This makes it a lot easier to detect a subtle change, or decide on the significance of a subtly abnormal gait in the future.

It is also often the case that a horse is perceived to be performing at its best, but actually after a few minor niggles have been detected and solved the horse finds an extra gear!

A sports horse examination will include an assessment of condition and musculature, auscultation of the heart, palpation of the limbs and back, trot up, lunge and flexion tests. If it is performed at the clinic the horse will also be weighed on the scales. If it is performed at the yard there must be a suitable area for lunging, ideally on a hard surface.



With sports horses older than 15 years it may also be beneficial to assess the eyes for old age changes such as cataracts, and possibly run a screening blood test for Cushing's disease.