

White Lodge Equine Clinic

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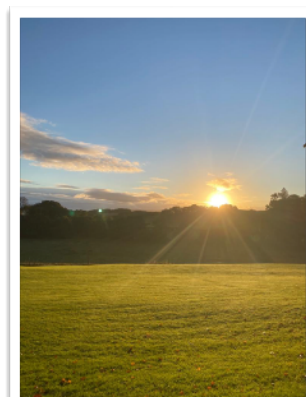


Welcome to our Winter Newsletter!

Welcome to the Winter edition of our equine newsletter! The rain has definitely arrived, and the white bits of our horses and our fields seem to have suddenly gone very brown!

We've had a busy year again, and are all very happy that our clients and patients are back out competing and enjoying themselves after such a difficult time! We're hoping to start our client education evenings again shortly, and it'll be an exciting moment to welcome a group of horse owners back into the practice. Watch this space!

In clinic news, we've now got some equine weigh scales, which we're all very excited about, and it's a good game now for the vets to see who can guess the closest to a horse's true weight! We've also resurfaced our hard surface for lunging lame horses, which is a really useful tool to pick up lamenesses that often can't be seen on just a straight line.



NEW CLINICS!

Weight Clinics

We have recently invested in a set of weigh scales for horses. These are routinely set up at our clinic, but can be transported out to yards for weight clinics.

Knowing your horse's weight is really important to:

- Know if your horse is overweight or underweight
- Calculate medicine doses, especially for common medicines such as wormers
- Monitor any weight changes
- Estimate how much weight a horse should be able to safely carry

We're currently running an offer of a weigh-in, and a tailored written feed, management and exercise plan with one of our vets at the clinic for only £30 (inc VAT). Scales can be brought out to yards for more than 5 horses.

Winter MOT

How has your horse been this summer? Is he going into winter sound and at a good weight?

We're offering a winter check for horses, which will suit all horses but especially competition horses. This will include

- Full examination, including dental examination
- Condition scoring and weight check (if horse brought into clinic)
- Trot up including flexion tests if necessary
- Lunging on a hard surface to assess for any subtle lamenesses
- Blood tests and worm egg counts can also be carried out but will incur extra costs.

This is best carried out at the clinic with full use of our facilities for only £40 (inc VAT).



FOCUS ON: MUD FEVER

Mud Fever is the common term used for the condition 'pastern dermatitis', meaning inflammation of the skin around the pasterns. This can have various causes, and winter unfortunately predisposes our horses to this difficult to manage condition.

Why does it happen?

- Damage of the skin's natural barrier by long term wetting of the skin, either by damp turnout, mud or over enthusiastic cleaning
- Bacteria (primarily *Dermatophilus congolensis*) and fungi already on the skin or from the environment multiply and cause infection, leading to further skin damage and exacerbating the problem
- Horses may be predisposed if there are any pre-existing sores on the legs, or if mites are present, irritating the skin
- White legs and a poor immune system may also make it more likely. Untreated Cushing's disease may be one of the reasons for a weaker immune system in older horses
- Mud fever can progress to a deeper infection, called 'cellulitis', when the horse's whole leg becomes swollen and infected, and this can be very painful

Treatments

If a disease has many different treatments, this is normally because none of the treatments are universally effective, and this is very true for mud fever!

A cure is incredibly difficult unless the horse can be removed from wet pasture, and a full cure may take weeks even in a stabled horse.

Treatments aim at removing the infectious organisms and drying the leg. Shampooing and brushing may cause more harm than good, damaging the natural skin barrier.

- Removal of scabs and cleaning the leg with an antiseptic wash (such as dilute hibiscrub)
- Legs must be thoroughly dried after every wash before products are applied, towels and hairdryers may help with this!

- Antibiotic ointments and barrier creams with an oil base can be used. These can be cling-filmed (not too tightly!) onto a leg overnight and covered with a stable bandage to help loosen scabs.
- Once the scabs are all off, allowing the leg to air in a clean and dry environment is often the best treatment
- Barrier creams should still be used when turned out
- Oral or injectable antibiotics are sometimes also needed, although this will require a vet to see your horse first

We stock various products to help prevent and treat mud fever that can be sold over the counter.



Prevention

Preventing your horse from standing in wet conditions, and allowing your horse's legs to dry fully as often as possible are the best prevention for mud fever.

- Stabling horses once a day in a clean and dry stable
- Fencing off particularly muddy areas of fields
- Clipping off feathers may help with management, but feathers may also help protect the leg by keeping it dry as long as the horse isn't stood in deep mud
- Moving water troughs and changing feeding areas so horses aren't creating and standing in particularly muddy areas
- Putting straw or sand down in muddy areas that can't be avoided
- Drying legs thoroughly every time after washing

RUGGING - WHAT AND WHEN?

Rugging can be a very contentious issue amongst horse owners. Various factors need to be taken into account when deciding what to wear, and any two horses in the same weather may need completely different approaches.



Horses who need a little less help!

Rugging overweight horses less can be a really important tool to help weight loss. Using one 'step down' with a rug will mean that horses don't have to use their body fat reserves to keep warm. This is

how horses in the wild keep warm, by putting on weight over summer and losing it each winter.

The thermoneutral zone (i.e. the temperature a horse doesn't need to spend any energy warming up or cooling down) of a 'normal' horse is approximately 5-25°C. The hindgut of a horse acts as a giant heater, fermenting plant material and keeping them much warmer than we are!

Are they warm enough?

Horses constrict the blood vessels on their extremities, so feeling their ears, face or legs is a poor indicator of temperature. Feeling under a rug behind the withers is a better assessment

Horses that need a bit of extra help

- Underweight horses, or horses prone to getting underweight over winter
- Old horses, as they often struggle to self regulate their own body temperature as well as younger horses
- Stabled horses will need rugging more, as they can't move about to keep warm

Below is a rough guide to help decision making!

Temperature (°C)	Clipped horse	Unclipped horse
-0 to -5	Heavy turnout with neck cover	Medium turnout
0 to 5	Medium turnout with standard or high neck	Light turnout
5 to 10	Light turnout	Nothing
10 to 15	Nothing or light turnout (no fill) if rainy and/or windy	Nothing

Vaccinations - Make Sure You're Up To Date!

After the equine influenza outbreak of 2019, various rules have changed regarding vaccine schedules. The equine 'flu vaccine is needed up to every 6 months by some competition bodies and clubs. BHA are changing the rules from January 2022, requiring all racehorses to have had 6 monthly vaccinations. Individual venues may also have their own rules to adhere to.

Vaccines often have to be given at least week before attending a competition/venue, so it's important that you check your horse complies **at least two weeks before** any events.

However if your horse hasn't had a flu vaccination in the last year, then they will need to restart their vaccinations, and won't be able to compete until at least **four weeks** after their first vaccination.