



# Ark Vet Centre

## Equine Newsletter



❄️ January 2023 ❄️

Welcome to the January newsletter, after a very wet and windy month we are all hoping spring won't be far away. We are seeing a few abscesses and mud rash cases due to the wet weather we are experiencing. We are also seeing some cases of asthma as horses are spending more time in their stables eating hay some have been affected by the dust in the environment. There is also a new inhaler designed specifically for horses, which actually appears to be very easy to use with horses taking to it well.

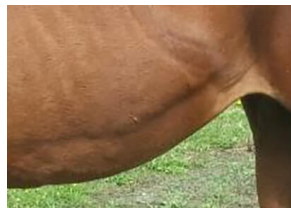
### Asthma

Equine Asthma, previously known as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) or Recurrent Airway Disease (RAO) is one of the most common causes of coughing in horses and ponies in the UK. It is a non-infectious, non-contagious condition that is environmentally induced due to the development of allergies/hypersensitivities to inhaled particles that are in the air. These particles can be anything from dust, and moulds to pollens and flowers.

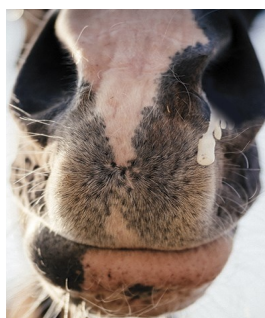
The condition is an inflammatory disease within the horses airways that causes the airways to thicken and to produce more mucus which in turn makes it more difficult for the horse to breathe. The horse then coughs due to the inflammation and to clear the excess mucus.

#### Symptoms include:

- Frequent cough
- Nasal discharge
- Increased respiratory rate and effort which often worsens at exercise
- Wheezing can be heard due to constricted airways
- Over time a "heave line" can develop along the bottom of the ribs



Diagnosis is usually made by a history and thorough examination of your horse/pony however sometimes a scope will be performed to allow us to distinguish between Asthma and other respiratory conditions such as infection.



During the winter months we see asthma associated with dust in the stabled environment.

#### Management involves:

- Bedding on shavings or other low dust materials
- Soaking/dampening/steaming hay or moving on to haylage as it tends to have less dust particles
- Turn out as much as possible
- Some more severe or chronic cases may require medication especially in an acute flare up. These tend to be either drugs to open up the airways or strong anti-inflammatories (steroids) to reduce airway inflammation. These are generally given orally however there is now an inhaler option which we will discuss below:

### Equihaler

The Aservo EquiHaler is a new design inhaler that has been specifically designed to fit a horse's nostril. The medication is delivered in a mist and is delivered as tiny particles so it can reach deep into the lungs. Where bronchodilators (ventipulmin) just open the airways, this medication actually eliminates the airway inflammation, meaning the cough can improve faster. The medication in the inhaler is a type of steroid that works specifically within the lungs. This takes out the risk of laminitis that we can see with oral steroid use.

Where the inhaler tends to work best is for the short term relief of the symptoms of asthma when a horse has first been diagnosed. In these cases where the dust needs to be eliminated from the environment, and can obviously be improved, we tend to advise using the inhaler whilst these changes are taking place to combat the inflammation within the lungs. Hopefully then once you stop using the inhaler your horse will no longer be affected because there will no longer be dust in the environment causing the asthma. Unfortunately some do require long term use where oral meds may be easier to use, but we can then just reserve the inhaler for severe flare ups.

