



Ark Vet Centre

Equine Newsletter



☀️ May 2023 ☀️

Welcome to the May newsletter, finally it feels like summer has arrived with ride out season underway and some sunshine! Unfortunately we have had some cases of laminitis in the past few weeks as well as colics due to changes in the grass. It is certainly that time of the year when we need to be careful with horses and ponies that are prone to getting laminitis and those that are overweight. We would advise that you think about limiting turn out or popping a grazing muzzle on to limit the amount of grass they're getting.

This time of year we also often see skin complaints such as fly bites or allergic reactions to things such as pollen so this will be our topic for this month's newsletter.

Urticaria (Hives)

Urticaria is one of the most commonly encountered skin diseases in horses. It can occur at any time of the year but is most commonly seen in the late spring and summer.

It is an allergic type reaction which occurs following exposure (e.g. by skin contact, eating or breathing in) of the horse to an allergen (the substance which it is allergic to). Sometimes we never know the exact cause / allergen but many causes have been implicated such as pollen, fly bites, diets, drugs, stings or contact with a substance.

If your horse develops hives it is worth considering any recent management changes such as moving fields, changing the bedding type etc, as they may possibly be the cause.



Once the horse has been exposed to the allergen, this in turn causes an allergic reaction which usually shows as the sudden appearance of soft nodules or raised doughnut-shaped areas over the horse's skin. The lumps are sometimes itchy but are not normally painful, they will usually self resolve, as long as the horse is not re-exposed to the allergen that caused the reaction.

It is important to try to work out the cause if possible so that we can try to limit the horse being re-exposed. You should call us if your horse is excessively irritated by the lumps or if they repeatedly re-occur. In severe cases we may prescribe either a steroid injection or a course of oral steroids to reduce the reaction. Also if the horse is excessively itchy then they may cause trauma to the skin during the process of itching. This may lead to secondary infections that require treatment via oral antibiotics or topical creams. If it becomes an ongoing issue for the horse we will often recommend allergy testing to identify the allergen that is causing the symptoms.

Buttercups

Buttercups contain ranunculin, which can be an irritant. It may cause mild soreness or blistering around the mouth and on the sensitive skin around the muzzle. It can look a little like sunburn and is most common on horses with pink muzzles. We tend to advise using a barrier cream on affected areas and if possible turning out somewhere with no buttercups.



Just a final note to say that we are now trying to email as many of our bills as possible rather than posting to try to be more environmentally friendly so please let us know if you have had any issues with receiving them.

