



# Ark Vet Centre

## Equine Newsletter



October 2023



Welcome to the October newsletter, the weather has definitely turned with winter well on its way. This month we are discussing Cushings as its an important disease of older horses and ponies and something which we are often testing for at the this time of year.

### Cushings

As many as one quarter of all horses 15 years of age or older are affected by pituitary pars intermedia dysfunction (PPID), also know as Equine Cushings disease. The condition results in the overproduction of a hormone called ACTH.

#### Clinical signs

The most common sign is laminitis, especially a horse that gets repeated



bouts or long bouts of laminitis. The other very commonly seen symptom is excessive hair growth resulting in a very thick, sometimes curly, coat that is often not shed in the spring. Other signs include:

- Pot Belly
- Muscle wastage or loss
- Weight loss
- Excessive drinking and urination
- Lethargy and exercise intolerance
- Abnormal fat pads
- Recurrent infections due to poor immune function

#### Diagnosis

To diagnose Cushings a blood sample is required which is sent off to the lab and levels of ACTH in the blood are measured. If levels are high then a diagnosis of cushings is made. Sometimes the levels can be borderline and we may advise either retesting in the future or if we are very suspicious of Cushings especially if they have laminitis we may do a further blood test called a TRH stimulation test. It is currently free to test for Cushings as there is a nationwide scheme so all you need to pay for is the vet visit.

#### Treatment

In cases where Cushings has been diagnosed we advise treatment with a medication called Prascend. It will not cure the disease however it will

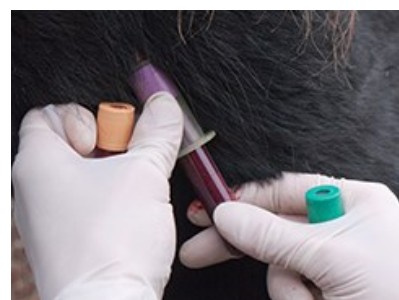


slow the progression of the disease and also alleviate most of the clinical signs. Depending on the size of the horse they are either started on half a tablet or a full tablet and it is common that the dose needs to be increased as they get older and the Cushings progresses. They will need to remain on treatment for the rest of their life. The most common side effect with this is inappetence or occasional diarrhoea.

Other **management changes** should also take place such as ensuring they are on an appropriate diet (ensuring feed is suitable for laminitics), clipping if their coat is very thick and ensuring they are up to date with worming and vaccinations as they may be more susceptible to infections.

#### Monitoring

Bloods should be monitored whilst they are on Prascend. Usually a follow up blood test is taken 4-8 weeks after starting Prascend to check they are on the correct dose and then usually they are re-tested every 6-12 months depending on how the horse is doing. Horses can also get 1 free monitoring test a year through the testing scheme.



Of all the clinical signs of Cushings laminitis has by far the biggest impact on a horses quality of life so it is essential that we keep horses as well controlled as possible to reduce the risk of them getting laminitis.

