



Ark Vet Centre

Equine Newsletter



❄️ December 2023 ❄️

Happy New year and welcome to the December newsletter, we hope you all had a lovely Christmas and new year.

We will be discussing winter laminitis in this months newsletter as we have seen a number of cases over the last 4-6 weeks with the colder weather. We will also touch on flu vaccinations with changes coming in for 2024.

Winter Laminitis

We have been seeing a few horses and ponies with laminitis over the past few weeks. Laminitis occurs when the sensitive laminae within the hooves become inflamed which can lead to changes structurally within the hoof capsule and severe pain.

It can range in severity from a stiff potterly gait to being unable to stand, classically you see the pony rocking back onto their heels, reluctant to walk, warm feet and weight shifting from leg to leg. It is important to spot and manage laminitis as soon as possible as it can become a fatal condition.

The main predisposing factor in laminitis is an underlying metabolic disorder such as equine metabolic syndrome (EMS) or Cushings disease. In the winter there can be an increased risk because the frost causes sugars to be accumulated in the grass overnight meaning when your horse goes out onto the frosty fields it then ingests a lot more sugar than normal which can induce laminitis. As well as this, cold stress can also contribute due to a decreased blood supply to the foot. This is especially important to be aware of in horses who have had laminitis in the past.

Management is key in both treating the current laminitis flare up and preventing it from happening again in the future, in first instance you should bring your horse or pony inside and give it a deep bed making it less painful for them to stand. They must go on a strict diet that contains very little sugars, just simple unmolassed chaff (look for the laminitis trust feedmark on feeds to ensure they are suitable for laminitics) and some soaked hay is enough until the horse is fully recovered.



Please speak to your vet as your horse should be examined and then go onto pain relief. In some cases we may want to do some blood tests for Cushings or EMS or we may want to x-ray the feet to gauge the severity of the changes within the hoof. This can assist your farrier in correctly trimming and shoeing your horse.

The best way to avoid problems at this time of year is to avoid turning horses out onto frost and if we have multiple days of frosty weather where the frost stays most of the day unfortunately the safest option is just for the horse to stay in with no turnout. Laminitis is easiest to treat when caught early so if you notice your horse appearing a little footy or being not quite right please get in touch.

New Vaccination Rules

Following some recent announcements we wanted to bring to your attention some vaccination rule changes for 2024. This is to bring all other organisations in line with the rules for racing and the BHA.

All horses and ponies receiving a **new primary course** of vaccinations from 1 January 2024 must be vaccinated according to this schedule:

Initial primary course of two vaccinations must be given: the second vaccination must be administered within **21-60 days** of the first initial vaccination.

Horses may attend activities 7 full days after receiving the second vaccination of the primary course.

A first booster vaccination must be administered within **120 - 180 days** of the administration of the second vaccination of the primary course.

Thereafter booster vaccinations must be administered at a maximum of 12 month intervals.

Horses and ponies must not attend activities within 7 days of receiving any vaccination.

FEI protocol insists that horses receive a booster within 6 months +21 days prior to arrival at the event.

So far the Pony Club and British Dressage have announced these new rules but we are expecting British Eventing and Show Jumping to follow suit. **This only applies to horses starting new vaccination courses in 2024** and historic vaccinations based off the old rules are permitted.

