



# Ark Vet Centre

## Equine Newsletter



July 2024



Welcome to the July newsletter, the lack of summer weather has unfortunately continued throughout July. The fields are so wet in places its like winter! We have seen a few horses bothered by the buttercups which can cause sores, usually on their faces, and then lots of the usual fly problems causing eye issues or infected bites. This month we will be discussing muscle problems more specifically on tying up as it is something we see a little more frequently in the summer in warmer weather where dehydration & higher work loads both factors in making issues more likely.

### Tying up in horses

Exertional rhabdomyolysis, most commonly known as 'tying up', is a syndrome involving the breakdown or destruction of skeletal muscle cells associated with exercise. Some horses tie up sporadically due to factors in the environment, such as an increase in training level or dietary in-balances. Others can suffer repeated or chronic bouts of tying up.

#### What are the symptoms?

- Increased heart rate and respiratory rate
- Increased sweating
- Muscle twitching
- A reluctance to move/lameness
- Firm, painful muscles over the back and croup
- Dark coloured urine due to damaged muscle cells releasing a substance called myoglobin which is then excreted in the urine (only in more severe cases)

The signs can at times look a little like colic, however it is important to try to distinguish between the two



because walking them (which we often would do for a mild colic) can actually make tied up horses worse.

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#### Causes

Sporadic exertional rhabdomyolysis may occur due to a horse training beyond its athletic capability especially being pushed too hard if they are unfit. It can also be seen if a horse is not warmed up correctly before a period high intensity exercise such as cross country or show jumping. This can occur in any breed.

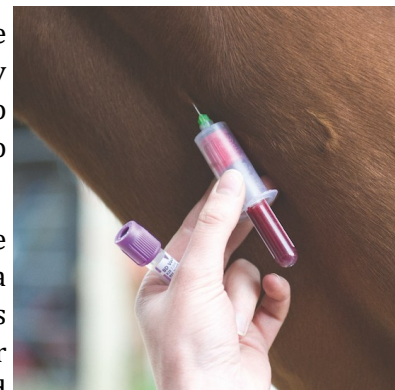


Recurrent exertional rhabdomyolysis is thought to be caused by abnormal calcium levels within muscle cells during contraction. This is seen primarily in Thoroughbreds and Standardbreds.

#### Diagnosis & Treatment

If you think your horse has tied up you should immediately stop exercise and move them to a stable ideally where they have restricted movement. Your vet should be called as usually they are very uncomfortable and require anti-inflammatory medication administered into the vein. In severe cases where the urine is already dark fluids may need to be administered to try to prevent damage to the kidneys.

Diagnosis is usually made based on clinical signs and a history of these symptoms appearing suddenly at or immediately after a period of exercise. We usually take a blood sample to confirm a tie up by looking for high levels of muscle enzymes within the blood. Box rest is also usually implemented initially to try to allow the muscles to recover, followed by small paddock turn out. Repeat blood sampling is important over the coming days so that we ensure exercise is only reintroduced once muscle enzymes have returned to usual levels. On average a period of 2-4 weeks off work is usually required depending on the severity of the initial tie up.



**Next month we will move on to discuss horses that chronically tie up, PSSM and dietary management of these horses.**

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