



### AN UPDATE ON 'MUD FEVER' AND 'RAIN SCALD'



#### **'Mud Fever' (Pastern Dermatitis)**

**Cause:** Often associated with recurrent wetting of the limbs during exercise or turnout, which is why we see it more commonly during the wet winter months (although we certainly saw quite a few cases this summer just gone too!). Common organisms involved include

*Dermatophilus congolensis*.

**Individuals affected:** Horses with white limbs are more prone to the condition than those with all coloured limbs.

**Signs:** Clear yellow oozing and crusting/scabs in the heel area, but they can also spread further up the limbs.

**Diagnosis:** Several bacterial and fungal organisms are usually involved together in this condition. Hair plucks, skin scrapings and bacterial swabs can help to focus treatment more specifically if there is no response to the first line treatment.

**Treatment:** Clip the affected area, apply Dermisol® cream thickly over the area and then cover with cling film (the

cream's keratolytic properties break down the crusting/scabs without the need for abrasive scrubbing). Apply a stable bandage over the top of the cling film and leave on overnight (for approximately 12 hours). Then remove the dressings and wash the area in dilute Hibiscrub® (Chlorhexidine) in hand hot water. The solution should be a very pale pink in colour, if the antibacterial scrub is used too strong it can damage the skin rather than help it. The legs should then be dried gently with a paper towel and an antibacterial cream e.g. Flamazine® (Silver Sulphadiazine) or Fucidin® applied morning and evening until the affected skin has healed.

**Prevention:** Before any skin damage occurs it is possible to reduce the risk of your horse being affected by pastern dermatitis by applying a barrier cream e.g. petroleum jelly before exercise or turnout. Barrier creams should be applied thinly to prevent them picking up dirt from the environment. Washing of limbs should also be limited to gentle cold hosing followed by gentle drying with a paper towel to prevent trauma from over zealous scrubbing/rubbing,

which can allow bacteria to enter the skin.

#### **'Rain Scald' (Dermatophilosis)**

**Cause:** Prolonged wetting of the hair and subsequent softening of the skin followed by invasion by the organism *Dermatophilus congolensis*. It is usually then followed closely by Staphylococcal or Streptococcal bacteria that add to the overall infection. All these organisms are found living normally on the skin surface, but when the skin is broken they take the opportunity to multiply and invade tissues deeper to the skin.

**Individuals affected:** Horses permanently at pasture with limited shelter that regularly get very wet are at high risk, but it can also be seen in horses caught out in one heavy rain storm. It can be seen throughout a wet summer as well as in the winter.

**Signs:** Areas affected are often on the body surface e.g. back and the rump (in the pattern of water 'run-off' zones). The skin becomes crusty and hard and the hair that remains is matted. Pus forms under the crusty areas.

**Diagnosis:** Microscopic exam of the underside of one of the scabs or an impression smear may pick up cells of the organism responsible and confirm a diagnosis.

**Treatment:** The affected horse should be stabled until the condition has resolved. Rugs will prevent further wetting, but will keep a moist environment through sweating/condensation at the skin surface, preventing resolution of the 'rain scald'.



Clean affected areas with dilute Hibiscrub® twice daily and apply a topical antibacterial cream such as Flamazine® (Silver Sulphadiazine). Horses that become systemically ill following deep infection may require a course of antibiotics.

**Prevention:** Minimise the horse's exposure to rain, especially if clipped, by providing field shelter, rugs, stabling. Avoid excessive grooming to encourage the natural oils in the coat.

**Please don't hesitate to contact the surgery if you have any questions on the contents of this newsletter or you feel your horse is suffering from one of the conditions mentioned.**

## EQUINE LECTURE SERIES

In association with

**Berkshire College of Agriculture** 

Held at

**BCA, Burchetts Green, SL6 6QR**

- THURS. 25<sup>TH</sup> MARCH** 7 30PM  
TIM BRAZIL BVSC. MRCVS  
HOW HEALTHY IS YOUR HORSE'S GUT?
- THURS. 22<sup>ND</sup> APRIL** 7 30PM  
COLIN HILL EQUINE DENTAL TECHNICIAN  
MODERN DENTAL TREATMENT
- THURS. 27<sup>TH</sup> MAY** 7 30PM  
ANDY DURHAM BVSC. MRCVS  
CURB THAT COUGH

**THURS. 10<sup>TH</sup> JUNE** 7 30PM  
'EQUINE EXTRAVAGANZA'  
FEATURING

**MARY KING** INTERNATIONAL & OLYMPIC EVENT RIDER  
**PROFESSOR DEREK KNOTTENBELT**  
LIVERPOOL EQUINE HOSPITAL

Bar / Refreshments / Raffle

**Tickets:** £7.50 for each talk or Series ticket £20.00  
Equine Extravaganza £15.00

Series ticket and Equine Extravaganza £25.00  
Hall Place Veterinary Centre

01628 622086 / hallplacevet@btconnect.com  
BCA Equine Department 01628 827529 / aking@bca.ac.uk

**PROCEEDS FROM THE LECTURES AND EXTRAVAGANZA WILL BE DONATED TO THE NEW EQUINE HOSPITAL AT LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY**

### NEW EQUINE VETS

**Alicia Fuller** BVSc BSc (Hons) MRCVS joined the Hall Place Veterinary Team as a full time Equine Vet in January. She graduated from the University of Liverpool in 2006 and has a particular interest in Equine Orthopaedics.



**Marc Adipura** MRCVS joined us in January after locuming for the practice over the last few months. He returns to the area with his wife and young family and enjoys all aspects of ambulatory equine practice.



