

Dukes Veterinary Practice

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Practice news

The spring was certainly a long time coming and even now it seems to be having second thoughts! However despite the problems finding enough good quality roughage most of our patients have come through the winter reasonably well. One thing that did catch some people out was the grass growth even despite the cold weather. We have seen a few really severe cases of laminitis so be careful not to let ponies or horses over-indulge. Horses are a lot less susceptible to laminitis but if they get it they can be much more difficult to treat.

The practice has been extremely busy lately, possibly because all the usual spring emergencies seemed to be condensed into one hectic two week period! On top of a busy schedule already this has kept the vets fully occupied. The fields also seem to be filling up with mares for AI and for our stallion, so we hope to have a busy stud season this year.

Mike Barker is coming back!!


Lynn has kept in contact with Mike over the winter and he is planning to stay with us for the last week of June. Many of you have benefited in the past from Mike's skills in sorting out difficult horses and starting youngsters. His greatest attribute however is that he is a tremendous teacher of horsemanship and can inspire confidence in dealing with horse issues to almost anyone. Mike may only be with us for a week this year so is likely to be booked up early. If you want to organise something contact Lynn now via the office, e mail her lynndukes@hotmail.com or follow the link via our website events page.

Bluetongue strategy for Scotland, Sheep Scab and brucellosis

Jim jointly organised and co chaired a meeting to which all veterinary practices in the North East of Scotland were invited to discuss Scotland's Bluetongue policy. Charles Milne, the chief veterinary officer for Scotland was invited to put the government's points across. He was extremely supportive of the livestock industry, and it would appear that Scotland is planning to adopt a much more robust control policy than England.

As yet no one knows if Bluetongue will come to Scotland and if it does come it could be another blow to the livestock industry. However from experience on the continent it would appear that the disease is relatively mild in the first year, but much more devastating in the second year once the level of infection in the midge population has built up. Since the disease has not yet been detected to be circulating this will hopefully give us the opportunity to act before the disease strikes.

Equine and Farm Animal Practice

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Previous work has shown that Bluetongue vaccination is highly effective, but to prevent disease spread 80% of susceptible livestock need to be vaccinated. We hope that no one jumps the gun and starts vaccinating with illegally imported vaccine as it will not prevent the virus establishing itself, but if discovered will immediately affect the whole of Scotland's Bluetongue Status.

The Scottish Government is currently selecting a vaccine and then will put £3million towards securing and subsidising vaccine stocks for Scotland. During the coming winter a compulsory vaccination scheme is likely to be put in place. This will be good for trade with England as there should be free movement of stock both to and from Scotland, but also should disease arrive the national herd should be well protected. Once vaccination starts we will lose our Bluetongue free status. This may have an adverse affect on exports, but animals will probably still be allowed to be exported, but only if a vet has administered or witnessed the administering of the vaccine and is able to certify which animals were vaccinated.

There have been problems with enforcing control since the compulsory treatment of sheep scab was abolished. This topic was also discussed at the meeting and there is likely to be a reintroduction of a compulsory treatment period during the winter months. Stock will not have to be treated if a vet is able to certify that there is no sign of sheep scab within the flock.

Since brucellosis testing has been stopped it is more important than ever to report any abortions or premature calvings in cattle. Even if born alive, any calving at less than 270 days gestation should be investigated. The rules have changed now and you do not have to isolate the animal but you should contact us and we will arrange for a test, paid for by DEFRA, to be carried out.

Farmer's meeting report

We had a very successful meeting in March and we are very grateful to Schering Plough / Intervet for their generous sponsorship of the event and also to Ken and Margaret Howie for providing such a good venue. Following on from the meeting we have had renewed interest in disease surveillance and already started tests on a few new herds. One of the things about any disease control program or health program is it is an ongoing situation. We all have good intentions but when calving gets a bit hectic in the spring it's easy to forget what those plans were. When you get a chance, sit down and review your plan and see if an update might be beneficial.

Foot balance meeting

There was standing room only at our equine foot balance evening and we even had a waiting list, although in the end due to a few last minute cancellations everyone that contacted us was able to come. To see the report visit our website www.dukesvets.com We are not planning on another meeting until the Autumn but we might have a summer polo party so watch this space!

Price increase

Unfortunately due to the soaring costs of fuel and commodities in general we are increasing our prices this month by an average of 2½%. However it's not all bad news as a few drugs have dropped dramatically in price such as Pergolide, for horses with Cushing's disease, which we have managed to source at less than a third of the previous price.