

Dukes Veterinary Practice

Dykehead Farm

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Newsletter August 2008

Practice update

We have extended the office opening hours to 8.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday. Outside this time you can still always get hold of the duty vet on 07966 367746 but for routine appointments and general enquiries please ring during these times. Marian Campbell has joined us to assist Linda in the office. Marian is a qualified veterinary nurse and has lots of experience working in veterinary practice in the North East of Scotland. Although an administrative role is new to her she is very versatile and has picked it up very quickly.

We also have Gabriel Muntaner from Argentina assisting Nick with the mares for AI and looking after our in patients throughout the summer. Although Gabriel had a limited understanding of English, he has had a lifetime working with horses and has been extremely useful. Amongst other things Gabriel took part in our natural horsemanship clinic we held with Mike Barker, and spent several days with Mike when he was with us in July. He has plenty of new ideas to take back to Argentina with him where horses are often treated very differently to over here.

Bluetongue

At the time of writing Bluetongue has not developed into a major problem in England, as has been seen in continental Europe. This may in large part be due to the mass vaccination of susceptible livestock. The vaccine is not yet available in Scotland, although 2 million contingency doses have been ordered should an outbreak occur. Legislation came in to force on 6 June 2008 which will make bluetongue vaccination compulsory for Scottish livestock this winter. As far as we understand the vaccine will only be available from veterinary practices.

The Scottish Vaccination Campaign will be compulsory and farmers will generally be allowed to administer the vaccine themselves, except where veterinary administration is specifically required (for example for animals intended for movement out of the Protection Zone). Subject to disease development, vaccination will be carried out during the Vector Free Period in winter 2008/2009. This will allow time for all Scottish livestock to be fully protected before the risk of disease transmission rises once more with the onset of higher temperatures.

Shoes are dangerous things!

The first metal horseshoes were developed about 2000 years ago and hot shoeing with iron shoes has changed relatively little over the last 500 years. The main purpose of horse shoes is to keep horses sound on a variety of surfaces and in general terms they are very successful at that.

Equine and Farm Animal Practice



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One of the major problems with them is that they are very hard and cause a significant number of unintentional injuries throughout the year. The majority of these are relatively minor flesh-wounds which either heal on their own, or following some form of treatment. However much more serious injuries such as limb fractures do occur and, although sadly we cannot prevent all of these, we can sometimes avoid a catastrophic fracture if the injury is picked up early enough.

Because the long limb bones of the horse are relatively close to the skin they are vulnerable to fracture following a kick from a shod horse. Often, instead of a complete fracture a hairline fracture is created at the point of impact. This fracture may not extend right through the bone from one side to the other and the horse, although often very lame, is able to weight bear on the limb. Typically after about a week the horse becomes much sounder and is turned out in a field. When a fracture occurs the edges of the fracture “die back” over the first week or so before new bone starts to form and the edges start to knit together. At this point the bone is at its weakest and if the horse is turned out then the limb can shatter completely.

These fractures are rare and often represent something of a diagnostic challenge. They are not always easy to detect on x-ray, but even so any wound of this type should be fully investigated as soon as possible. If a fracture is picked up the horse will face a lengthy period of rest, but many of these will heal very successfully.

Embryo transfer foals born

The first two foals produced by embryo transfer at the practice were born this summer. Both appear to be strong and healthy and we are looking forward to many more in the future.

Problems with equine insurance claims

Most of the time most insurance companies are very reasonable and fair to deal with. However we have had several problems with one company in particular. Recently we were involved in a case where a horse sustained a nasty injury in the field. It took a while but the horse healed really well, but then the insurance company wrote to the owner saying they would not pay for the injury as the fencing in the field did not comply with BHS guidelines. For a start the horse was not injured in the fence, and secondly the fencing was new and of a very high standard. After explaining this over the phone, we still had to write a letter to the insurance company enclosing photographs of the fencing before they agreed to settle the claim, and even then it took almost six months for them to pay! To avoid this unnecessary stress be careful which insurance company you choose.

Evening appointments

We have been booking routine appointments until 7pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights during this summer and this has been very popular with our clients. The charges are the same as a daytime appointment so long as the appointment is booked during routine office hours. These appointments are often the first to fill, so if you want a specific day you need to book well in advance. We may suspend these appointments from November to March depending on demand.

Footnote

To see our previous newsletters and for further information on a variety of diseases and conditions check our website www.dukesvets.com which is updated regularly.