

Equine Newsletter



Hello and welcome to the winter edition of our newsletter.

Winter can be a challenge for most horse owners. It's wet, muddy and cold, plus the daylight hours are short and the nights are long. However, winter solstice is just around the corner, which means the lighter evenings are coming.

Horses need additional care in the winter to stay healthy and happy. We have put together some helpful hints to prepare your horse for winter. Turn to page 03 to find out more.

Looks can be misleading and your horse's long winter coats could be hiding whether your horse is underweight or overweight. Prior to adjusting your horse's diet, it is essential to have an objective idea of their body condition score. To discover more about body condition scoring your horse, take a look at page 05.

Did you know laminitis can occur all year round? On page 06 we discuss the three causes of laminitis and how to keep your horse safe from this common and painful disease.

Equine biosecurity is a set of management protocols to help keep horses safe from disease. It is essential you apply equine biosecurity measures as part of your daily routine to help prevent an outbreak of any infectious disease. Find out more on page 07.

On behalf of everyone at Donview Veterinary Practice - Equine, we hope you have a fantastic Christmas and New Year.

*Winter
is here*



02 Donview VP - equine news

Find out our latest news at the practice, from our new x-ray machine to our zero waste boxes for our PPE.

03 Helpful hints to prepare your horse for winter

We have put together some hints to help keep your horse healthy and well throughout the winter months.

05 Body condition scoring

Prior to adjusting your horse's diet, it is essential to have an objective idea of the horse's body condition score.

06 Three causes of laminitis

Systemic inflammatory response syndrome (SIRS), endocrine disorders and overload.

07 Equine biosecurity

What you need to know!

Equine Practice Updates

New equipment

We are making ongoing investments in new equipment. For example, we have just upgraded our respiratory endoscope to two scopes, one for general upper respiratory tract usage and one for guttural pouches. The second is an HD video scope giving us excellent image quality!

We have also upgraded our radiography and purchased a state of the art DR system giving us high level image quality instantly.



Staff professional development

Once COVID passes, the members of our equine team will be heading down to Lanark to spend some time with a specialist. They will be undertaking high level orthopaedic and reproduction work.

It's an excellent opportunity for our vets to learn new skills from a referral level service.

We are privileged to have Mike Burrell working at Donview, so we are already offering referral level work but the relationship we have with Clyde vets will further secure this.



Reduced equine visit charges in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire*

SHARE THE CHARGE WITH FRIENDS!

This applies to horses on the same yard or close by neighbours.

Arrange a Vet visit at the same time as your friends and save on the visit charge:

- If we see two client's horses at the same time pay just £18.84 each
- If we see three client's horses at the same time pay just £12.56 each
- If we see four client's horses at the same time pay just £9.42 each
- If we see five client's horses at the same time pay just £7.55 each

*Based on visits within 20 miles from Inverurie. Reduced visits are still available over 20 miles, please ask for details.



Zero waste boxes

At Donview Veterinary Practice, we are trialling zero waste boxes for our PPE.

The boxes are supplied by TerraCycle, a recycling company that collects difficult to recycle packaging and products and repurposes the material into affordable, innovative products.





Helpful hints to prepare your horse for winter

Your horse's routine

Coming into winter some owners stable their horses/ponies longer and reduce turnout. If you are going to change the horse's routine than remember to do it gradually to reduce stress and avoid colic and other potential health risks.



Check your paddocks

Make sure that your paddocks are in good condition.

Check that your fences are suitable with no protruding nails and no gaps or weak timber.



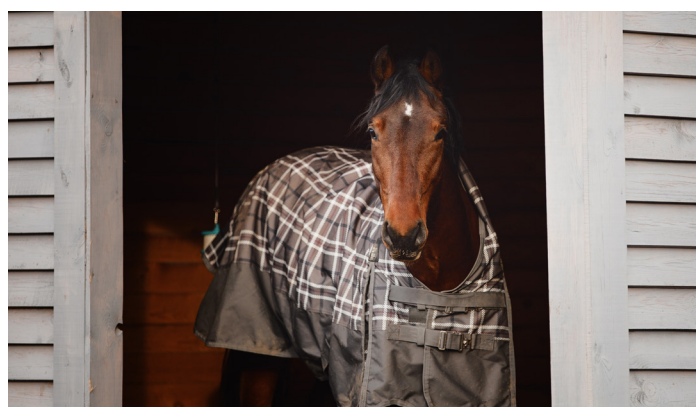
Sycamore seeds and seedlings

Ensure your paddock is safe – not having a lot to graze in their fields can mean that horses try to eat acorns, sycamore seeds, or other poisonous plants, which can lead to disease.



Provide shelter

Horses are great at regulating their body temperatures, even in cold weather. However, during winter months they will still need some sort of shelter, so they can shield themselves from the elements, if they choose to.



Wet environment and mud

This time of year puts horses' feet at increased risk of abscesses, thrush and mud fever. Make sure you check daily when looking after your horse, as they are much easier to treat when caught early.



Consider feeding a balancer

Grass starts to lose its nutritional value even though the warm days and cold nights can result in grass growth. Consider adding a ration balancer to provide vitamins and minerals.



Check water troughs/drinkers

Water troughs/drinkers can be frozen and prevent horses from drinking enough, which can lead to complications such as impaction colic.

Double check all water pipes to ensure they are properly insulated and protected from freezing.



Be safe!

Make sure you and your horse are safe and seen on the road.

Wear Hi-viz clothing for you and your horse no matter what time of day or what time of year



Exercise

During winter many horse owners have to make the decision on whether to turn their horse out or not, whilst some have no choice but to keep them stabled.

Even if your stabled horse can't be turned out they still needs a good leg stretch on a daily basis, either in hand or ridden.

When exercising make sure you warm your horse up and cool them down properly. If they are stabled for long hours, this may make them stiff and the colder weather means muscles can take longer to get going properly.



Body condition scoring

Prior to adjusting your horse's diet, it is essential to have an objective idea of the horse's body condition score. This is graded on a scale of 0-5 scale, 2.5 being ideal condition. This objective score relies on the amount of fat deposits on the neck, withers, shoulder, ribs, loin and tailhead.

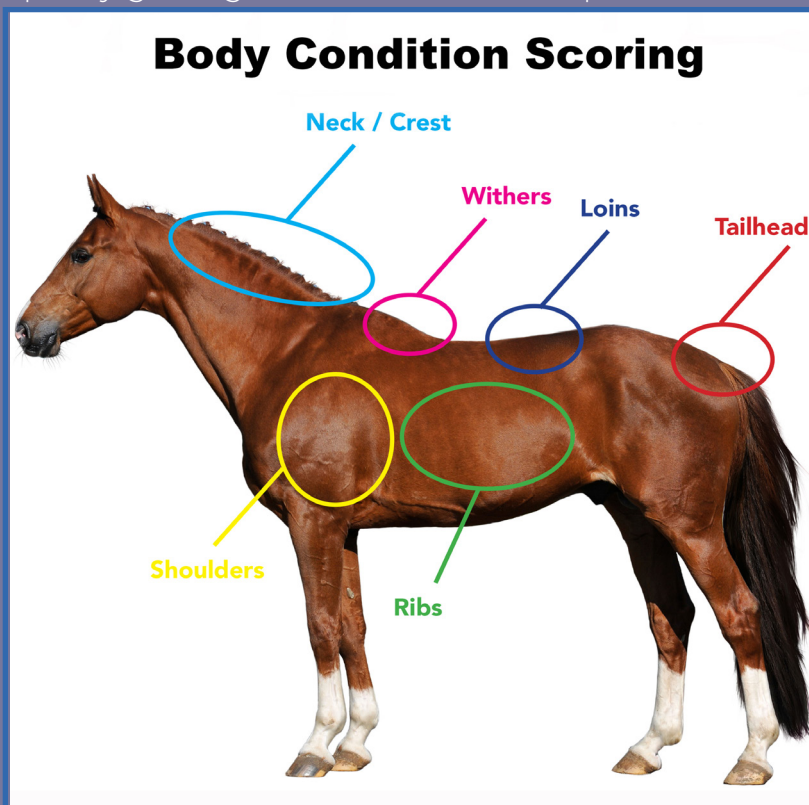
Coming into winter, a body condition score of 3 can be acceptable as horses will often lose weight through the winter due to lower quality grazing and the ambient temperature.

The first and main ingredient in the horse's diet is forage! Most horse owners will answer very precisely how much hard feed they give, but very few know how much hay their horse eats let alone the exact amount they consume. This knowledge is the key to balancing their diet and reaching the ideal body condition score.

The main diet adjustments are:

- Decreasing the amount of concentrate to lose weight
- Increasing the hay intake and quality to gain weight

If following these rules doesn't achieve the ideal body condition score, the exact plan for dieting should be made in conjunction with your veterinary surgeon (we are all here to help).



Losing weight can be difficult but key to the treatment of pathological cases, such as laminitis, equine metabolic syndrome, obesity, and can start with the following:

- Reduce the energy content of the forage. This can be achieved by soaking the hay for 12 hours. It is important to note that this will reduce most of the nutrients except the fibre and therefore a balancer should then be used to keep the mineral and protein intake to an acceptable level
- A horse needs to eat about 2% of their body weight per day. In managing obese horses the decrease of intake should be progressive although in some extreme cases, under veterinary care, we will advise a more intensive regime. A gradual reduction such as starting at 1.9% of his body weight for a week, then 1.8% the following week, until reaching 1.5% of his body weight can be trialled

Increasing the energy intake on thin horses or even sport horses can be done choosing feeds rich in either proteins such as alfalfa (lucerne), or fat like vegetable oils associated with vitamin E, or an intermediate like sugar beet. At very high intensity exercise (polo, racing, high level eventing), starch based products are necessary but otherwise they should be avoided as they can increase the risk of gastric ulceration.

Any case not responding to these dietary measures should be seen by a vet as there could be underlying condition preventing from achieving healthy body condition score.

Three causes of laminitis



Systemic Inflammatory Response Syndrome (SIRS)

This is when laminitis occurs as a secondary problem to an inflammatory or septic disease. The most common occurrence is when a horse gorges on feeds high in carbohydrates such as grain, which causes rapid fermentation of partly digested starch, absorption of toxins and gut damage. Other primary illnesses that may lead to laminitis include colic, colitis and septic conditions such as a retained placenta after foaling.



Endocrine disorders

The endocrine system is a collection of glands that produce and secrete hormones. Around 90% of cases of laminitis are thought to be caused by endocrine diseases such as Equine Metabolic Syndrome or Pituitary Pars Intermedia Dysfunction (PPID), which is also known as Cushing's disease. Affected horses have an abnormal response to the sugars in grass, which can make them more susceptible to equine laminitis. Excess body fat and some steroid medications can also cause hormonal imbalances, making horses more prone to the disease.

Overload

It's much less common but horses can get laminitis as a result of overloading a limb, usually when the opposite limb is damaged and unable to bear weight.

How to keep horses safe from laminitis

Follow these ten steps to help protect your horse from this excruciating and potentially lethal condition:

- Don't let them get overweight
- Provide regular exercise
- Check bodyweight regularly
- Restrict grass intake by using a muzzle or strip grazing
- Turn your horse out at night when the grass contains less fructan (the storage form of sugar)
- Avoid turning your horse out on sunny, frosty mornings, when the grass may contain high levels of fructan
- Feed a low sugar, low starch diet
- Avoid cereal-based feeds
- Monitor daily for signs of equine laminitis such as discomfort on hard ground, warm hooves or a raised digital pulse
- Prevention is always better than cure – if in any doubt always call your vet





Equine Biosecurity: What you need to know!

Equine biosecurity is a set of management protocols to help keep horses safe from disease.

Applying equine biosecurity measures as part of your daily routine will help to prevent an outbreak of any infectious disease.

How to prevent an infectious disease outbreak on a yard ?

The most efficacious method to prevent any disease is to perform a correct isolation of any new horse arriving on the yard, ideally over a period of three weeks. The temperature should be monitored twice daily. An increase in rectal temperature above 38.5°C reveals a systemic inflammation which should always be treated as a potential contagious infectious disease, unless proven otherwise.



Equine Influenza virus is one of the most contagious diseases that affects horses and can be devastating in susceptible populations.

We are often complacent about this disease because we expect horses to be vaccinated. However, the proportion of horses vaccinated in the UK falls below that which is required to prevent a major disease outbreak

The virus can spread in the air over large distances and can also be transmitted via

Clinical signs of Equine Influenza are:

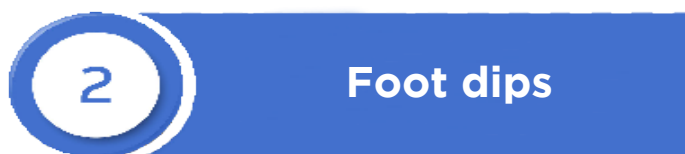
- A nasty cough and snotty nose
- High temperature
(103°F to 105°F / 39.5°C to 40.5°C)
- Loss of appetite
- Depressed
- Muscle soreness
- Reluctance to move



How to perform appropriate isolation?

Because infective material can be transported on clothing, hands and inanimate surfaces it is important to keep in mind that everything that is in contact with the isolated animal is potentially infectious. It is also important to remember that most disinfectants are inactivated by organic matter: clean and scrub if needed first, then apply the disinfectant.

What is needed to avoid clothing contamination:



Here are some tips to reduce the risk of contagious diseases:

1. Know your horse's normal vital signs and behaviour. This will help you to quickly spot if anything is wrong
2. Keep vaccinations up to date. Vaccinating is vital in protecting individual animals and preventing the spread of disease
3. Always wash your hands after handling an unknown horse before your own and ask others to wash their hands before touching your horse
4. Do not share or borrow equipment
5. Do not let your horse make physical contact with new arrivals or unknown horses when out and about
6. When out, do not use communal water sources
7. When moving to a new stable, make sure you thoroughly disinfect it before moving your horse in
8. All new horses should be isolated for ideally three weeks before introducing them to the other horses
9. Make sure any new horses at the yard are vaccinated against flu



How to prevent the spread of an infectious disease on a yard?

If a horse develops symptoms of a contagious disease, it is important to move them away from the others and use the isolation guidelines mentioned above. All the horses that have been in contact with the affected horse must be closely monitored for clinical signs and their rectal temperature taken twice daily. Blood testing and other samples can help monitor the spread of the disease, according to your vet's guidance.

In addition it must also be remembered that horses can carry contagious pathogens that can affect people, such as *Salmonella* spp., *Clostridium difficile*, Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus*. Therefore, good hygiene measures are essential around every horse.

Donview VP - Equine Christmas & New Year Opening Hours

Monday 21st December

8am - 7pm

Tuesday 22nd December

8am - 7pm

Wednesday 23rd December

8am - 6pm

Thursday 24th December

8am - 5pm

Friday 25th December

Out of hours service

Saturday 26th December

Out of hours service

Sunday 27th December

Out of hours service

Monday 28th December

8am - 7pm

Tuesday 29th December

8am - 7pm

Wednesday 30th December

8am - 6pm

Thursday 31st December

8am - 5pm

Friday 1st January

Out of hours service

We continue to provide a 24 hour emergency service

Staff Spotlight with Charlie Carnochan



What is your job role?

Clinical director and Veterinary Surgeon

Describe your typical working day?

I do a lot more management work than the other vets but really enjoy being out on the road, especially when the weathers nice!

What is the most rewarding part of your job?

With the investment in our equine department recently, its been very rewarding to watch our vets and our equine department develop into the high level it is now supplying.

What is the one thing you could not live without?

My family!

Any pets?

A dog, two cats, nine chickens and three sheep.

What is your hidden talent / party trick?

I can play the saxophone!

If you were a horse, what breed would you be?

My wife said a Clydesdale (not in size and stature!). Apparently, I keep plodding on and just keep going.

