

EQUINE NEWSLETTER

Latest Covid-19 update

- We are doing our utmost to maintain a 24-hour emergency service for our equine patients.
- As some of you will be aware from coming into the vets, our offices are operating a "closed door" policy. There are marked areas for drugs to be collected from to minimise contact between people. This is in order to keep you and the team as safe as possible.
- All routine procedures, including pre-purchase examinations, routine dentistry, routine health checks, poor performance / mild lameness examinations, etc. have been suspended for the time being. This is being kept under constant review.
- Telephone / video consultations will be used when feasible.
- For cases where physical examinations are absolutely necessary (i.e. for ill and injured patients) social distancing (i.e. at least 2 metres between people) should be practised.
- Whenever patients are to be examined, this should be outside the stable wherever possible.
- Routine 6-monthly influenza vaccines are not being undertaken.
The halting of routine influenza vaccinations will have particular implications for competition horses. ALL other influenza booster vaccinations have been halted for one month (to be reviewed after that time).
The administration of other equine vaccines, such as tetanus and equine herpesvirus vaccines, will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Due to the ever-changing situation, please keep an eye on our Facebook page for updates or call the practice to discuss your individual concerns.

We thank you again for your custom and cooperation at this most extraordinary time. From all the team at Belmont Farm & Equine.

Testing times

A lot has changed since the contents of this newsletter were written and the piece on pre-purchase examinations might seem out of place. However, we will get through this and horses and ponies will, once again, be bought and sold.

We recognise that these are testing times for all and that it has turned our lives upside down. This is especially true for those who have been, and are, directly affected by the virus during this pandemic and all those working in environments where there is likely to be a higher risk of exposure to the coronavirus, Covid-19. It may seem inappropriate to be sending information about our worming package at this time. However, because of the current need to maintain social distancing, we have had to temporarily suspend many of the routine preventative procedures that we would undertake in normal circumstances. Monitoring the worm burden of our horses, ponies and donkeys is important and it is something that we can all continue to do with minimal risk of jeopardising human safety.

To keep the potential risk of C-19 to a minimum we will place clearly marked boxes outside the surgeries. Please place your samples inside. We will disinfect the boxes every time we remove the samples. The boxes will probably be placed beside the medicine collection boxes that are already there and most people are familiar with.

Before bringing the samples in we would be grateful if you could call to let us know that you are on your way. It is important that we take them from the box and refrigerate them as soon as possible to suppress hatching of the eggs.

We thank you again for your custom and cooperation at this most extraordinary time.

From all the team at Belmont Farm & Equine.

Emergencies / Out of hours

In the unfortunate event that your animal requires veterinary attention out-of-hours, please dial the usual office number, where you will be given the telephone number of the on-duty vet.

It may be useful to keep a pen and paper handy to take this number down. On the rare occasion that the duty vet is out of telephone reception, your call will be received by a helpful member of our answering team, who will ensure someone attends the emergency as soon as possible. **The answering team at Kernow can be contacted directly on 01432 381440, if for any reason you cannot get hold of the duty vet.**

HEREFORD: 01432 351471 • BROMYARD: 01885 488440 • LEDBURY: 01531 806129 • @belmontfarmvets

Clinical Vets: Dominic Alexander • Will Allman • Mike Bellamy • Andrew Cooke • Nick Gibbon • James Hipperson • Hannah Mitchell
Alex O'Malley • Matthew Pugh • Caroline Rank • Harry Walby • Charlotte Watkins

Support staff: Sadie Davies • Michelle Harris • Lucy Hughes • Sybil Legge • Laura Langford • Alice Mainwaring • Ros O'Sullivan • Sophie Powell
Andrea Smith • Pam Strange • Millie Whitlock

So you've found the horse of your dreams, what next...?

Purchasing a horse should be an exciting prospect but it can be a protracted and frustrating experience, with numerous pitfalls along the way. Everybody has a different set of priorities but when you've tracked down 'the one', the vetting process is designed to provide an impartial assessment of the steed in question.

Irrespective of the value of the horse, we always recommended to undertake a 5-stage pre-purchase examination (PPE), and often these are being requested by insurance companies before policies can be taken out. A 2-stage vetting is a poor cousin to the 5-stage as it provides no assessment of the horse under saddle, a much less thorough evaluation of the horse's soundness and no opportunity to check the horse's wind. If you would still like to go ahead then the vet performing the PPE will ask you to sign a waiver confirming that you understand the limitations of the shortened procedure.

To prevent a conflict of interests, the horse should not be registered with the veterinary practice performing the PPE. This often means that as a potential purchaser you may not know the vet performing the examination, but this will not affect the thoroughness of the procedure and if you do not know a vet in the area where the horse is stabled, ask the vendor for their advice on which practice to approach.

When you ring to book the vetting you will need the following details available:

- **Your own contact details, the contact details of the owner/vendor and the location of the horse**
- **The name, breed, sex, age, and colour of the horse**
- **What you intend to use the horse for and the intended purchase price**

Always ask to speak to the vet performing the PPE, this may require them calling you back but it is important to discuss your position, aspiration and concerns with them before the day. They will also want to speak to the vendor and will need the know the following things:

- **Is the passport available?**
- **Can the horse be groomed and stabled for 3 hours prior to the vetting?**
- **Is there a dark stable to fully examine the eyes?**
- **Is there a firm trot up area available?**
- **Is there an arena and rider available to do the ridden work (5 stage only)?**

The vetting itself usually takes around 90 minutes and has the following sections:

Stage 1: Sketch, check microchip, examine the horse from nose to tail including the heart and eyes. A blood sample is also taken which is stored to be used at a later date if there are any concerns about the horse being on any medications at the time of the vetting.

Stage 2: Straight trot up and flexion tests on all 4 legs, lunge on a firm circle, backing and circling

Stage 3: A ridden piece of work where the horse is observed being tacked up, mounted and warmed up before being ridden in trot and then canter on both reins, pushing to the horse being sweated up if possible so that the wind can be checked. The horse is then brought back to a walk and the heart checked before a warm down can be carried out.

Stage 4: A period of rest to allow the heart rate to return to baseline

Stage 5: A second straight trot up and flexion tests on all 4 legs

At the end of the procedure the vet will report their findings to the purchaser, who can then make an informed decision as to whether or not they wish to purchase the horse. Many clients are focused purely on the horse either passing or failing, in reality what is more important are the list of points noted on the vetting and how these are likely to impact the usability, insurance exclusions and value of the horse.

Sweet itch

As we come into the spring, horses that suffer from sweet itch will again need some support. Sweet itch is an allergic reaction to midge bites, that commonly presents as hair loss and skin irritation to the mane and tail. Horses present with these symptoms as a result of self-induced trauma because of the "itchiness" that they experience.



Management of the condition can be very frustrating and difficult to control, but ultimately relies on preventing midges biting the horse, and then consideration for therapies aimed at reducing the

severity of the allergic reaction.

Prevention of midge bites should be the mainstay of treatment and includes use of fly rugs, fly repellents (permethrin containing products are most likely to be effective) and not turning prone horses out at dawn and dusk when midges are at their most active. If possible, choose a paddock for turn out that will minimise midge exposure – windswept hills are ideal!

Therapy options can include steroid medication (anti-inflammatories) for short to medium term control, and Cavalesse® is an in-feed supplement that is used successfully in some horses to reduce the severity of symptoms. Recently there has been increasing interest in immunotherapy – this involves a vet visit to take a blood sample, from which the laboratory will test for sensitivities to many potential insect allergens. With this information an individual specific course of immunotherapy will be prepared and this administered by vet and owner at varying intervals over the course of around 10 months.

If this something that may be of benefit to your horse please speak to one of our equine vets.

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