

WINTER 2022



EQUINE NEWSLETTER



COVID-19 UPDATE

If you have an upcoming visit and you or anyone in your household is displaying symptoms of COVID-19 please contact the office to rearrange your visit. Due to increasing cases we may experience some staff shortages and need to rearrange your visit, we will continue to prioritise urgent and emergency care.

Thank you for your continued understanding and support in these exceptional circumstances.

MUD FEVER

Healthy skin consists of an outer epidermal layer which acts as a physical barrier to the environment. When this layer is damaged, bacteria can infiltrate and cause infection and inflammation which results in mud fever. The skin can be damaged by traumatic injuries, feather mites, wet conditions and excessive leg washing, sandy surfaces in arenas, certain bedding such as straw, boots and bandages and immune or photosensitivity reactions.

Most commonly the condition is confined to white haired areas. Early cases present with redness, hair loss and skin thickening at the heels or back of the pastern, progressing to crusty scabs, ulceration and oozing. If left untreated infection can spread causing cellulitis, an infection of the soft tissues within the limb. Affected horses will be very lame with significant heat and swelling tracking up the limb.

Treatment of mud fever is case dependent but mild cases can often be treated without veterinary intervention. Horses must be kept on dry, clean bedding and avoid being turned out in poached fields. Clipping lower limbs will aid treatment. Take care with sand arenas as the sand can abrade the skin surface.

1. Affected limbs should be bathed with warm water and dilute 0.1% chlorhexidine or Malaseb shampoo using clean cotton wool. Remove any scabs that come away easily but do not forcibly pick them.

2. Rinse the legs well

3. Use a clean towel to dry the legs thoroughly afterwards. Ideally use a different towel for each leg to avoid spreading the infection.

4. Antibacterial cream can then be applied daily and after washing. Repeat the washing every 3-4 days, doing so more often will over-dry the skin.

Contact the practice if:

-Mud fever is failing to respond to basic management as above within 2 weeks or is worsening

-Feather mites is suspected (heavy feathered horses, stamping and scratching lower limbs)

-Signs of cellulitis

Further work up to establish the underlying cause may include blood sampling, skin scrapes, swabs or biopsies. Veterinary treatment for mud fever varies depending on the cause and unfortunately there is no one simple fix. Some treatments include topical or systemic antibiotics, steroids and anti-inflammatories, mite treatments and altered management.

Risk of mud fever can be reduced by avoiding repeated wetting and chilling of the skin. Rather than daily washing, allow the mud to dry then brush it off. Traditionally feathers were left on to provide protection, however we now understand mud fever is more common in feathered legs because they take longer to dry. Therefore clipping the legs will allow legs to dry faster and enable earlier identification of a problem.

Waterproofing the legs with barrier cream such as Sudocrem is good practice but it must be applied to clean dry legs, otherwise the area between the wet skin and greasy cream will incubate bacteria. Turnout boots are becoming increasingly popular on the market, however when applied to wet legs these can act as a perfect breeding ground for bacteria and in our experience are better avoided. Rotation of paddocks to avoid poaching and fencing off particularly muddy areas such as gateways will also help to minimise risk.



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Winter Nutrition

A balanced diet is crucial in helping to ensure a fit and healthy horse. As the winter months go on and additional feed is added to diets to maintain weight and meet energy requirements, it is also a perfect time to drop any extra weight from the summer months through calorie restriction.

Horses have evolved as trickle feeders, designed to be chewing or occupied by feed for a large portion of their day. Their digestive systems are primarily designed to digest fibre and, therefore, forage (hay/haylage/grass) should represent most of their diet. Don't forget that forage is essential to keep a population of healthy hindgut bacteria.

As we expect much more of the domesticated horse in terms of workload, and often the forage provided is limited or of less-than-ideal quality, a forage only diet is unlikely to provide all the nutrients a horse needs. This is also the case when poor quality or soaked hay is being fed to achieve weight loss. Vitamins, minerals and protein can be topped up in your horses diet by adding in a good quality balancer to compliment the forage. In 'good-doers' this is often the only additional feed required.

Prior to adjusting your horses feed it is essential that as an owner you have an objective idea of your horses' body condition score. This objective score relies on the fat coverage on the neck / withers / shoulders/ ribs and tailhead. See the table opposite to give your horse a body condition score.

A horse needs to eat 2% of their body weight per day to maintain weight. This includes grass, hay and any hard feed provided. Any reduction in intake should be done on a gradual basis and can be monitored by one of your equine vets here at Belmont Farm and Equine.

BASIC FEEDING RULES DO'S

- Feed little and often – the stomach only represents around 10% of his digestive capacity. As a result, meal sizes need to be small, e.g 1.8kg (dry weight) for a 500kg horse.
- Maintain a routine to reduce stress.
- Feed plenty of fibre – as a trickle feeder, providing ample fibre helps to satisfy the horse's psychological need to chew and in doing so also helps to keep the digestive system healthy.
- Provide clean fresh water at all times.
- Feed each horse as an individual, taking into account workload, age, body condition, type, time of year and reproductive status.

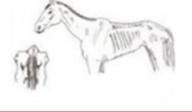
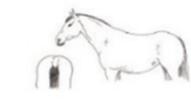
BASIC FEEDING RULES DO NOTS

- Avoid making sudden diet or management changes – as doing this will present a significant challenge to the digestive system causing the healthy microbial population to be disrupted, which can lead to colic or diarrhoea.

What are the next steps?

1. Is my horse the right weight?
2. Is my horse on the right amount of food for his requirements and workload?
3. Is my horse on a balanced diet?

If you would like some more information, please visit www.healthyhorses.co.uk for owner booklets or contact Belmont Farm and Equine for support.

<p>0 - Emaciated</p> <p>Neck - marked 'ewe' neck, narrow and slack at base.</p> <p>Back & Ribs - skin tight over ribs, ribs clearly visible. Spinous processes sharp.</p> <p>Pelvis - angular pelvis, skin tight, sunken rump. Deep cavity under tail and either side of croup.</p> 	<p>1 - Poor</p> <p>Neck - 'ewe' neck, narrow and slack at base.</p> <p>Back & Ribs - ribs easily visible, skin sunken either side of spine, spinous processes defined.</p> <p>Pelvis - rump sunken but skin supple, pelvis and croup well defined, cavity under tail.</p> 	<p>2 - Moderate</p> <p>Neck - narrow but firm, shoulder blade clearly defined.</p> <p>Back & Ribs - ribs just visible, spine well covered, spinous processes felt.</p> <p>Pelvis - rump flat either side of spine, croup well defined, some fat, slight cavity under tail.</p> 
<p>3 - Good</p> <p>Neck - firm neck, no crest, shoulder blades defined.</p> <p>Back & Ribs - ribs and spinous processes covered but easily felt.</p> <p>Pelvis - covered by fat and rounded, no gutter, pelvis easily felt.</p> 	<p>4 - Fat</p> <p>Neck - slight crest, wide and firm. Shoulder blade covered and difficult to feel.</p> <p>Back & Ribs - ribs well covered, gutter along spine.</p> <p>Pelvis - gutter to root of tail, pelvis only felt with firm pressure.</p> 	<p>5 - Obese</p> <p>Neck - marked crest, very wide and firm, folds of fat, shoulders buried.</p> <p>Back & Ribs - ribs cannot be felt, deep guttering, back broad and flat.</p> <p>Pelvis - deep gutter to root of tail, skin distended, pelvis cannot be felt.</p> 

REPEAT PRESCRIPTIONS

Please remember that we require at least 48 hours notice for repeat prescriptions. All requests must be checked and approved by our vets before they can be dispensed. In some cases there may be a need to discuss your order with a vet before it can be dispensed. Please order your repeat prescriptions in plenty of time to avoid disappointment.



BELMONT FARM & EQUINE VETS

Follow us on Facebook to keep up with what our vets are doing out and about, virtual client evenings and our latest offerings.

Emergencies and 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 reception your call will be forwarded to a helpful member of our answering service who will ensure someone attends the emergency as soon as possible.

The answering team at Phoneta can be contacted directly on 01432 381 440, if for any reason you are unable to reach the duty vet.

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