

Animal WOFs Newsletter **– May/June 2012 –**



Welcome to another *Animal WOFs for Lifestyle Blocks* newsletter.

Each issue we are covering important animal health issues relevant for that time of year. Please feel free to give us feedback or ideas for the next issue, with any topics you would like to see covered.

In this issue:

Animal Health Diary – things to watch out for at this time of year

Is it woody tongue or what?

Wound management in horses – by guest writer and Vet Janine Janssen

“Weed of the month”... an introduction to poisonous plants



Animal Health Diary May/June

4 handy hints for Autumn animal husbandry



Trace elements

Maintaining correct levels of trace elements like Selenium, Copper, Cobalt/B12 and Magnesium in your livestock, is very important as these are vital for optimum growth, production and health. Deficiencies can cause weight loss, illthrift and problems around calving or lambing, therefore checking trace elements regularly is important.

A blood test is available for the above and other trace elements and usually a representative sample of 6-10 randomly chosen animals from the mob to be tested gives a good indication whether supplementation is needed.

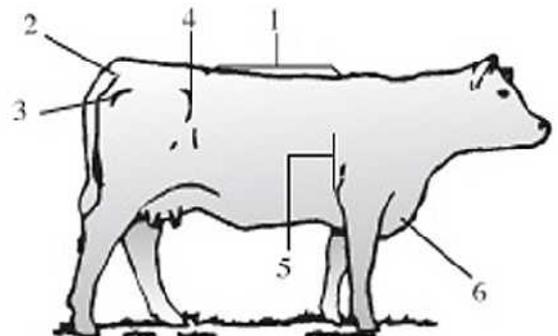


Vaccinations

Remember to vaccinate animals prior to lambing/calving, especially for clostridial diseases. Also ensure young stock have been vaccinated to get full protection from Lepto, Tetanus & co.

Body condition score

Get your body condition charts out again and ensure all animals have sufficient body condition scores before going into winter. This is the ideal time of year to get some weight gain prior to calving. Animals should be in a body condition score of 2.5-3/5 at this time of year.



- | | | |
|--------------|----------|------------|
| 1. Back | 3. Pins | 5. Ribs |
| 2. Tail Head | 4. Hooks | 6. Brisket |

Faecal egg counts



Worm burdens are still high and we are still seeing calves and other young stock with clinical signs of parasitism.

Get your faecal egg counts tested and ensure you are using and good broad spectrum drench to avoid worm related illness in your stock.

For any questions about the above matters, please contact us at the clinic on 368 2891 or email animalwof@lhvc.co.nz.

Is it woody tongue or what?

This month's article hatched out of a couple of similar yet completely different farm visits that I did recently on a lovely sunny Autumn day.

Two farmers rang up in the morning, wanting calves with suspect woody tongue seen.

Before I go any further, “woody tongue” is an infection of the tongue or other organs like the cheeks or lips, caused by the bacteria *Actinobacillus lignieresii*.

This bacteria is present in the soil and can enter the affected body part through cuts or wounds. These cuts are often caused by erupting teeth in young stock and heifers, or grazed thistles or sharp blades of grass.

Woody tongue is associated with the following clinical signs:

- Drooling/dribbling from the mouth
- A firm swelling under the lower jaw
- In some cases the tongue will protrude
- The tongue feels very solid like a piece of wood
- Weight loss, loss in production and reduced growth rates occur
- Animals are typically off food and unwilling to graze
- In severe and chronic cases dehydration and starvation can cause death



Treatment of woody tongue requires a certain antibiotic (your Vet can recommend the right product for you).

Then provide good long grass and fresh water to make it easier for the animal to graze and make up for the loss in body condition.

Getting back to the story, calf #1 presented with a solid swelling under the jaw, profuse drooling from the mouth, some dehydration and weight loss.

On closer examination I found several large clumps of semi-fermented and almost rotten grass and pine needles wedged in the calf's mouth, all the way back into its throat.

The tongue was normal, not woody, but the impaction of the feed materials had caused very similar signs to woody tongue.

This condition would not have responded to antibiotics. The impaction had to be gently removed (with a gag in the calf's mouth as those molar teeth at the back of the mouth can be very sharp and cut into your hand – do not try this at home...).

Once removed the calf felt much better and started drinking from the trough then started grazing later that same day.

Calf #2, which I coincidentally saw straight after calf #1, also presented for suspected woody tongue.

This calf had a soft swelling under the jaw, weight loss, some dribbling and also a severe grass scour. A faecal sample revealed a severe worm burden.

In this case the swelling under the jaw was submandibular oedema, a build-up of fluid called “bottle jaw”, which is often associated with worms in young stock.



Submandibular oedema in a calf

This calf was given a good dose of a decent drench to remove the worm burden.

In this case also, antibiotics would have been a waste of time a money.

The moral of the story is, when you have a calf presenting with signs of woody tongue, keep an open mind and consider calling a Vet to assess the animal, as there are several different diseases and disorders that can all cause very similar signs but require completely different treatments.

Wound management in horses

Proper wound management will help to get your horse back to normal function with the best possible cosmetic result as soon as possible.

Early management of the fresh wound is especially important in obtaining this goal. Infections, contamination of the wound, haematomas and seromas are some of the problems you can face during treatment which will slow down healing.

Movement of the wound and continuous mutilation (e.g. picking and scratching by the horse) will also slow down the wound healing considerably. Ponies heal faster than horses and upper body wounds heal faster than wounds on the legs.



Before you get all excited, you need to know that wounds heal in 3 phases which can take up to a year to complete. It depends on the size of the wound, the movements in the wound & on the wound edges and the way the wound is managed, as to how long it takes to get through each of these three phases.

The 1st phase is the Inflammatory/debridement phase. This is the first 12 hours to 4 days after the original injury occurred. A Fibrin clot forms to bind the wound edges together and provides a framework for cells to migrate over. Local redness, heat, swelling and pain are all normal in this stage.



The 2nd phase, or Repair phase, starts on day 4 or after the wound occurs and last for about 16 days. Granulation and epithelial cells migrate over the fibrin clot and start to fill up the wound.



The 3rd stage is the Maturation phase, which starts after approximately 20 days. You will notice that the wound edges are contracting and the wound is getting smaller. The skin slowly starts to heal over the wound.

Suturing wounds

A lot of owners want their horses wounds stitched. However in most wounds in the limbs, closure by sutures is not only a waste of time and money, but often not-indicated. Stitching a wound can result in delayed wound healing, wound breakdown and an overall poorer result.

Suturing wounds is only advisable when the wound site is fresh (less than 6-8 hours old), is easy accessible, and when there is no movement of the wound and there is minimal tension on the wound edges when sutured. The wound needs to be clean and not infected, an intact blood supply to the wound edges is needed for the wound to close and no tendons, ligaments, bones or joints should be involved when a wound is sutured.

Assessing the wound

1. First off all, always check if your horse is vaccinated for Tetanus (see WOF March/April). You don't want your horse dying because of a ground bacteria when you can protect him/her with a simple vaccination.
2. Then assess the amount of blood lost by the horse, by checking how much blood is on on the ground, the membrane colour around the eyes and the horse's heart rate.
3. Then get your horse on a concrete surface and start hosing the wound down with water. A direct jet with a pressure of 7 to 15 PSI (a high pressure hose) for 1-2 minutes, is really good for fresh wounds. The pressure will remove all the dirt and will stimulate the healthy tissue. It will also give you the opportunity to assess the wound.
4. Clip and shave around the wound and use (KY) jelly in the wound to prevent wound contamination due to hair & dirt from falling in to the wound from the clipping.
5. Scrub the skin surgically and clean the wound with diluted (0.05%) Chlorhexidine. Iodine is too irritating for fresh wounds and should therefore not be used.
6. Check for bone fractures or lacerations and see if any joints are involved. Tendons should also be checked. If any of these structures are involved please ring your veterinarian immediately as these wounds need special attention.

Bandaging a wound

The type of bandaging used changes with each phase of wound healing. This helps the wound to heal with as little scar tissue as possible. Hosing down the wound with cold running water (no pressure) is good to clean the wound from dead tissue and “pus”. It is important to leave bandages on for at least 7 days to allow the wound enough time to heal underneath the dressing. If taken off too early, wound healing may take longer and more scar tissue will develop.

During the first 5 to 7 days it is a good idea to cover the wound with a topical antibiotic ointment (mastitis treatments are good for this). Then apply a non adherent semi occlusive dressing (Melolin) is a good brand.. Cotton Wool, Soffban or Gamgee should then cover the dressing with Vetwrap applied over the top of that, to keep the dressing and bandage on the wound. Elastoplast can be used to keep the bandage up.



After 7 days the bandage can be removed and the wound re-assessed. Hose down the wound with running water, but do not put a pressure hose on the wound. The pressure will wash off the newly formed fibrin clot and the freshly migrated granulation & epithelial cells. Check for swelling, inflammation and infection of the wound and leg. If any signs present contact your Vet immediately.

Melolin should then be re-applied to the wound, covered with Soffban, Gamgee or Cotton Wool and finish with Vetwrap, as before.

Most ointments delay woundhealing because they stop new cells migrating over the wound. Do not apply any ointment at this stage of the wound healing. If you want to use something on the wound, use Manuka Honey on the dressing as it is the only “ointment” that does not prohibit wound healing.

On the second bandage change (day 14 after original injury occurred) hose the leg down with cold running water. Do not put a pressure hose on the wound. Depending on how the wound is healing, (i.e. in which phase of wound healing the wound is) Melolin or Paraffin Gauze should be used as a dressing.

If the wound is still in the second stage rebandage as discussed above.

If the wound has entered the maturation phase (wound edges are contracting) use Paraffin Gauze as a dressing and cover with Soffban, Gamgee or Cotton Wool. Vetwrap or Elastoplast can be used to keep the bandage over the wound. Ensure this bandage remains on for at least 7 days.

Once the wound has entered the Maturation phase and the wound is getting smaller and is scabbed over, a light bandage consisting of Soffban and Vetwrap should be applied until the wound is fully healed. This bandage is to prevent the horse from picking on the wound and opening it back up. This bandage can be changed every 2-5 days if preferred.

Management of horse after bandaging

Once a horse is bandaged up, it is important to prevent movement of the wound. Make sure the bandage is applied correctly and is covering at least 2 joints (the one above and the one below the wound). This will prevent the leg from bending too often.



Also restrict the movement of the horse by yarding it in a small paddock or stable

Check daily for pressure points, bandages do ride up/down and can cause necrosis or new wounds by cutting off the blood supply. Bandages should be checked for tightness and the leg should not have swelling directly above the bandage.

It is of the utmost importance that the bandage, in all phases of the healing, is not removed for at least 7 days to give the wound enough time to heal. If the bandage gets dirty or smells, check if there is swelling in the leg, if not leave the bandage on as they are designed to draw out the fluid of the wound.

A bit of pain stops the horse from overusing its injured leg, so be careful with giving your horse phenylbutazone. It will reduce the swelling but also masks the pain, which can lead to overuse and aggravation of the wound area.



Taking pictures during rebandaging will give you a nice overview of the wound healing. It will show you how the wound is healing even though it might not seem that way.

Have patience, wounds can take up to a year to heal properly, with minimum scarring. Do not rush anything, give it time and you will be able to use your horse to its full potential again.

If the wound develops granulation tissue, do not use ointments or sprays. They usually irritate the tissue and make it worse. Instead ring your vet for advice; we can help you treat the wound in the correct way.



Now available from your vet:
Wound-packs for horses

Emergency pack	\$82
Starter pack	\$39 - \$64
Follow up pack	\$22
Basic pack	\$14

“Weed of the month”...

This month featuring: - Ragwort -

Description:

Ragwort grows from a flat rosette of leaves on ground level into a 30cm to 1m tall stem with tough dark green leaves that are irregularly indented.

The flowers are bright yellow with closely packed heads.



Distribution:

This plant is widely distributed on both the North and South Island and in this district it can be abundant in some pastures.



Species affected:

Horses and cattle are mostly affected. Sheep appear more resistant to acute ragwort toxicity but can have chronic liver damage and delayed mortality without showing signs of early poisoning.

Clinical signs:

Affected animals develop an indefinite illthrift with loss of condition and reduced production. This is followed by nervous signs like depression, ataxia (wobbliness) and irritability, extending over several weeks before death occurs.

As the ragwort toxins attack the liver, other signs of liver damage like yellow gums, weight loss and a photosensitisation similar to facial eczema may occur.

Diagnosis of poisoning:

This is based on the history of exposure and clinical signs mainly, but a blood test is available to test liver function.

Treatment:

Mainly symptomatic, treatment depends on the severity of disease and may involve liver support drugs and anti-inflammatories. Remove animals from affected pastures and consider removing and burning ragwort plants to stop them spreading.





“How’s that foot coming along that she stomped on last time?”

Looking forward to see you at the clinic or at your place,

*Step of the team
@ LHVC.*

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