

# August 2018 Equine newsletter

## Atypical Myopathy and Ragwort Poisoning

### Why do either matter right now?

With the current strange weather this year cases of both are already being seen around the country so it is essential to stay vigilant for these potentially fatal diseases.

### Atypical Myopathy

#### What is atypical myopathy?

It is a severe muscle disease that is often fatal caused by horses eating sycamore seeds, leaves or seedlings.



#### What signs should I look for?

Remember your horse may only show a few of these signs:

- Muscle trembling
- Weakness- the horse may be lying down more than normal, may struggle to stand, walk or breath
- Brown or dark red urine
- Colic signs but still eating
- Unable to stand
- Depressed- may hang head

#### How do I prevent it?

If possible cut down your sycamore trees if there are any in your pasture. Unfortunately, the seeds can travel long distances on the wind so even if you think there are none around it is important to regularly check your fields. It is really important you clear the sycamore seeds and sycamore leaves from your grazing fields or fence off where they are. If you are not able to you must ensure there is enough forage for the horses in the field preferably providing adlib hay on top of the grazing grass to try and prevent the horses' eating the seeds.

#### What do I do if I suspect my horse has atypical myopathy?

Please call us immediately! Your horse may need referring straight away depending on what are vets think. This condition kills 75% of the horses who develop it. With prompt treatment we can try and improve your horse's chances. Treatment generally involves putting your horse onto fluids intravenously and taking regular blood tests to assess your horse's progress.

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## Practice News

### Repeat Prescriptions

Don't forget when requesting a repeat prescription, we need at least 24 hours to produce one. We may also need to see your horse again if we haven't seen it for a while (timing dependent on the condition so worth asking your vet how frequently they want to see your horse).

### Competition News

#### South West Endurance

Congratulations last month to all those competing at Cirencester in the inter-regionals! The South West team came third! Antonia one of our vets competed around the 64Km (admittedly for her old group Cromwell but we will forgive her that).

#### Good luck at the area festivals!

Good luck to all our clients heading to Duchy College for the Area Festivals! Please let us know how you get on!

#### Pony club camps and adult riding camps

Hope you all have a lovely time and keep an eye out for our vets who may well be giving a talk at your camp! Please let us know how they get on (embarrassing photos welcomed!)

#### Let us know!

If you are out and about competing or just conquering your fears at home this summer, please let us know! We would love to feature some of our amazing clients on facebook and be able to share how proud we are to be able to help you get there whether that be in a small or a big way!

## Ragwort Poisoning

### What does ragwort look like?

Ragwort has distinctive yellow flowers (rosettes) a little like daisies with yellow petals.

They flower from May to October.

### How do I remove it?

It is a legal requirement to remove the Ragwort on your land under the Ragwort Control Act 2003 and the Weeds Act 1959.

It is important to ensure you pull the ragwort up with the roots still attached. Ragwort forks can help you do this. When picking or handling ragwort please make sure you wear gloves. Long term contact with it can make you ill as well! Once you have removed it from your field how you dispose of it is also essential. You need to make sure you keep it away from your horses and its not going to sit around anywhere. If you can do so safely it is ideal to burn the ragwort but remember to do any fires a significant distance from your stables or any wooden buildings. Otherwise please throw the ragwort away. Any cut plants that are left still pose a big risk to your horse.

It is important whilst there is any ragwort in the field to ensure your horse has plenty of grazing or hay available to reduce the risk of temptation before you are able to remove the ragwort.

You can spray your fields with weed killer to prevent it growing in the autumn and the spring but any fields sprayed then have to be rested for 4-6 weeks. It is advisable to speak to companies providing this service before undertaking it to ensure you are using the correct products at the correct time of the year.

Your horse can develop liver failure a few weeks to several months after ingestion. This condition is potentially fatal hence it is so important that any horse affected receives veterinary treatment as soon as possible.

### What do I do if I suspect my horse has ragwort poisoning?

Please ring us! The sooner we start treatment the better. We may need to do further diagnostics such as blood tests, ultrasounds or liver biopsies to evaluate your horse's condition, be able to determine your horse's prognosis and assess our treatment's effect.

