



## Hot and Dusty

This prolonged hot and extremely dry period has led to the rise of horses and ponies suffering with respiratory conditions. Horses who have suffered previously with low grade airway disease are now presenting with more severe signs and we are seeing some horses who've not suffered at all in the past now showing low grade signs of respiratory disease.

The cases on the rise are non infectious and have an allergic component (a hypersensitivity) often to dust or hay spores which is being exacerbated by the hot and dry weather. There is a lot more dust circulating in the environment, even for horses managed outdoors 24 hours a day, as soaked hay is drying out quickly and tracks used by horses in fields become dry and dusty.



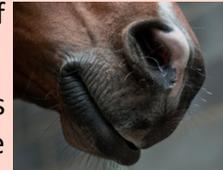
Horses of any age or breed can develop a hypersensitivity to dust and often it can go undetected until the horse or pony suffers with a 'flare up' of the condition when suddenly they can appear in considerable distress. This is becoming an increasingly common scenario that our vets are being called out to out of hours.

Ideally if the low grade signs of a new or existing hypersensitivity can be spotted before a flare up occurs then they can often be avoided.

## Signs which may indicate a low grade dust hypersensitivity in a horse:

 Elevated respiratory rate: This is often the first sign that the horse's respiratory rate is under more strain. For a healthy horse or pony the respiratory rate would normally sit at around 8-12 breaths per minute. It is helpful to get used to what is normal for your horse (which may fluctuate a little, depending on what is going on around the yard etc.) and this will make it easier to notice an increase. If a respiratory rate is creeping over 20 breaths per minute for an extended period of time then it might be an indicator that something is not right.

 Flared nostrils: if a horse or pony's respiratory system is struggling they will often have flared nostrils once the disease process progresses as they try to get more air (and oxygen) into their lungs. Flared nostrils is almost always a sign that something is wrong and can also be an indicator of pain in a horse



 Anxious or agitated appearance: Horses who feel like they're struggling to breathe often have a 'wide eyed' or anxious expression. It may just add to the picture of a horse which doesn't look quite right.

 Fixed stance: If a horse is really struggling to breathe they will often stand fairly rooted to the spot with their neck extended with a reluctance to eat feed or graze as usual. This is because they are focusing all their attention on trying to get air into their lungs.

 Abdominal effort: Often once a horse has increased its respiratory rate in the face of a respiratory condition it will then progress to recruiting its abdominal muscles to help shunt air in or out of the lungs - this is a subtle change and can either happen as they breathe in or out (or both). This is sometimes accompanied by a noise like an inspiratory wheeze or an expiratory 'grunt'.

**If you detect one or more of the changes above in your horse we would advise calling the practice to discuss the case with a vet.** They will be able to give you some specific advice appropriate for you and your horse depending on what management set up you have available and how severe the signs are.

## Some management changes which may help:



Providing soaked hay (and ensuring it has not had the chance to dry out again before it is all eaten)



Feeding hay from a container on the ground so that it doesn't get distributed over ground where it might dry out or get mixed in with dust from the ground. Feeding from a net may also help but it can increase the amount of hay spores distributed in the horse's breathing space when it is pulled from the net.



Turning horses out on an area where the ground is covered in grass and does not have large dry worn areas or dust patches which get kicked up easily.

It can take a while (days) for a horse's lungs to settle even once significant management changes have been put in place so continue to monitor your horse closely and if the condition starts to worsen then your horse may need some medication to get things back under control.

## Hannah

Sadly Hannah will be leaving Summerleaze in early August to take up a teaching position at the Royal Veterinary College. Hannah is passionate about the support and development of students and we know she will thrive encouraging and educating the next generation of equine vets.

It's heart-breaking to be losing such a fabulous member of the team but exciting to see her progressing her career.



We wish her loads of luck and know she'll stay in touch.

**The Need To Know:** by now, you will have received an email regarding a change to our Terms and Conditions. These can be found on our website or, a hard copy can be requested and posted to you.

**Diary Date:** to give you advanced notice we will be closed on Bank Holiday Monday 29th August, with an emergency only service in operation on that day.

## Medication that can help your horse in this situation include:

💊❤️ Steroids (anti-inflammatory): usually given systemically (by injection) in an emergency or severe situation but can be delivered via an inhaler to less severe cases if the horse tolerates the device or orally if the horse needs the medication for a prolonged period.

💊❤️ Ventipulmin (bronchodilator to help open up airways): Can be given by injection, in feed or via an inhaler.

💊❤️ Aservo Equihaler: this is a relatively new inhaler product which is specifically designed for horses diagnosed with severe Equine Asthma (whether it is triggered in the winter or the summer) and is an easy way of administering an effective steroid to the airways for a course of around 10 days.

## Inhaler

If your horse has been prescribed an inhaler you may have concerns about how your horse will tolerate the product being administered.

Our Nurses will provide clicker training for you and your horse before treatment commences (free of charge).

Clicker Training is used to reassure your horse with administering the inhaler and the 'click' sound it makes as a dose is given. The clicker training can be used each time the product is given and will ensure minimal stress for your horse.

We also use clicker training for needle shy horse. Amy and Emelie can provide training for you and your horse. Please ring the office (01297 304007) if you would like some more information.



[www.summerleaze-vets.co.uk](http://www.summerleaze-vets.co.uk)



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