

## March 2024 Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea in horses can be mild, and with changes of grass quality and seasons can sometimes be expected. However, it can also be fatal so it is important to know the difference and to ring us immediately if you have any concerns.

### When should you call a vet right away?

- If your horse is dull or quiet.
- If your horse is off their food.
- If your horse is unhappy in themselves.
- If your horse has profuse, watery diarrhoea.
- If your horse has developed a patch of swelling under his belly or chest.
- If your horse's gums look abnormal such as appearing pale, red or purple.
- If your horse has lost weight very quickly.
- If there is blood in the diarrhoea
- If there are worms present in the diarrhoea
- If they are showing signs of colic
- If they are still a foal (although we aren't going to talk specifically about foals in this newsletter they are at far greater risk of becoming dehydrated so can potentially need treatment for any diarrhoea far sooner)

### Different treatments for Diarrhoea are dependant on cause but can include:

Probiotics, fluids, hospitalisation and cortico-steroids and fixing underlying cause!

### Should I always call the vet for advice when my horse has diarrhoea?

Even if your horse is still bright and happy and not showing any of the signs in the yellow box, it may still be worth seeking advice from a vet. If in doubt call us!

### Causes of mild diarrhoea

Mild diarrhoea can result from simple things like a sudden change in diet, turnout onto new grazing, changes in feed, forage or stress. These will usually resolve quickly. Changes to the diet can cause serious alterations to the horse's gut bacteria if changed suddenly, so it is important to do this to as gradually as possible.

In some cases, the addition of a probiotic to their feed can help the balance of bacteria in the gut at times of stress or feeding change.



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## What is the link between dentistry and diarrhoea?

Horses need to be able to chew forage effectively in order to be able to digest it. If long fibres from hay and haylage get to the gut without having been properly chewed this can cause diarrhoea or normal faeces with a watery component passed afterwards. This is observed more over winter when horses are on a greater percentage of hay or haylage than grass. To try to prevent this it is important to keep up to date with regular dentals exams usually ever 6 -12 months. You can also feed your horse shorter fibre such as alfalfa, chaff or soaked fibre nuts, however it is important to avoid chaff if your horse has diastema (gaps between the teeth). If you are unsure what to feed please speak to one of our team.

## Some of the more serious causes of diarrhoea

Some causes of diarrhoea can be fatal if left untreated hence it is so important to ring us if you have any concerns

Infectious	Non infectious
Salmonella- This bacteria is infectious to people as well! So good hygiene is key if it is suspected	Use of antibiotics- hence it is so important to not use antibiotics unnecessarily
Clostridia- Can potentially infect people as well so again good hygiene is so important	Use of anti-inflammatories- such as bute. This is very rare but if it occurs it's important to ring us.
Redworm disease (larval cyathostomiasis)- Particularly in young horses as spring starts but can happen in winter as well. Good pasture management and regular worm egg counts are important as a prevention. It can have long term impact on the horse's ability to maintain weight and respond to parasites. Diarrhoea after worming may represent emergence of these larval worms.	Inflammatory bowel conditions- similar to humans where the horse's immune system attacks the lining of its gut. These can be complicated to diagnose and can require abdominal ultrasounds, absorption tests or analysis of abdominal fluid
	Lymphoma- most common lymphatic cancer in horses and unfortunately once the diagnosis is made, treatment isn't curative but instead palliative as the prognosis is very poor

### Don't forget coming up we have:

Client meeting on Equine Respiratory Disease and Equine Skin Disease.

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March 6.30-7pm @ Kilmington Cricket Pavilion EX13 7RB

Please RSVP [summerleaze@summerleaze-vets.co.uk](mailto:summerleaze@summerleaze-vets.co.uk)

Don't forget to follow us on our Facebook, Instagram and Youtube pages!

