

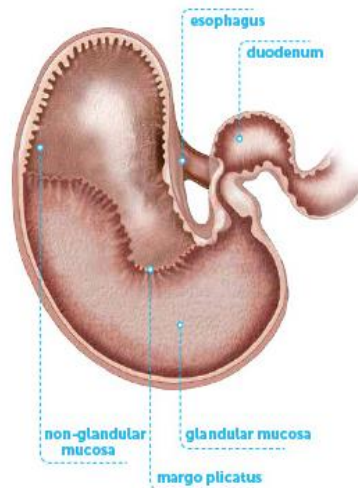
# FEBRUARY NEWS

## Equine Gastric Ulcer Syndrome

We have been successfully running our gastroscopy clinics for a year now so wanted to share with you some information and pictures from some of our clinics.

### What is Equine Gastric Ulcer Syndrome?

Equine Gastric Ulcer Syndrome (EGUS) describes the ulceration of the stomach lining following exposure to gastric acid. EGUS can be divided into Equine Squamous Gastric Disease (ESGD) where ulcers are found in the top part of the stomach and Equine Glandular Gastric Disease (EGGD) where ulcers are found in the lower part of the stomach.



The highest prevalence of ESGD occurs in Thoroughbred racehorses with 80-100% affected within 2-3 months of training. 17-58% of show/sports horses and 37-59% of pleasure horses are affected. Endurance horses have an ESGD prevalence of 66-93% during the competitive period. A study in the UK found EGGD in 54% of leisure horses and in 64% of sports horses. Of the horses that were selected for gastroscopy in our clinic in the last year, based on their clinical signs, 93% of those horses were diagnosed with EGUS.

### What causes Gastric Ulcers?

Horses have evolved to continually feed and acid is constantly secreted into the stomach, which means prolonged periods without food can lead to ulceration. As mentioned above the horse's stomach is divided into two parts (See picture above), the lower (glandular) part secretes acids and is protected by a bicarbonate-rich mucus and the upper part (non-glandular), which lacks this protective layer.

The causes of EGUS are multifactorial.

Low forage/high concentrate diet.

- Periods of starvation.
- Intermittent access to water.
- Long periods of stabling.
- Intense/increased exercise.
- Regular/prolonged transport. Feeding rehydration sachets/pastes regularly.
- Increased stress levels including foals at weaning, moving to a new yard/owner.

### What signs will I see in my horse?

A wide variety of clinical signs might be present in individual cases and can be very vague ranging from poor appetite, colic, poor body condition, poor performance and changes in attitude and behaviour. It is hard to diagnose EGUS based on clinical signs alone and we would strongly recommend that EGUS be confirmed by performing gastroscopy as described below.



Summerleaze Vets Ltd  
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### **Equine News**

Sadly, Philippa will be leaving us on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> March.

Philippa will be pursuing a career in small animal medicine.

### **How can they be diagnosed?**

Gastroscopy is the only reliable method for definitively identifying gastric ulceration. It involves passing a narrow video-endoscope into the stomach, under sedation, to visualise the stomach lining. This is a very minimally invasive procedure, which is usually well tolerated.

### **What is the treatment?**

Once ulcers have developed, changes in management alone are usually not sufficient to remedy the problem. Omeprazole paste given orally is usually recommended as an initial treatment with a gradual reduction to a maintenance dose. This medication must NOT be mixed with feed and must be given directly into the horse's mouth on an empty stomach. It is also advisable to with-hold feed for at least 30 minutes after treatment. Depending on the location of the ulcers some horses may also require additional treatment such as mucosal protectants. EGUS is curable but will require long-term management to prevent recurrence.

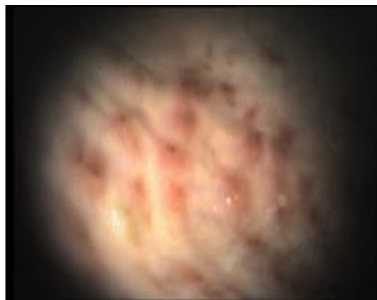
### **Can ulcers be prevented?**

Small adjustments to management can help reduce the potential of ulcers developing in your horse.

- Increase pasture turnout.
- Provide good quality, ad lib hay or haylage.
- Feeding more frequently/continuous forage available.
- Reducing the amount of concentrates fed or spilt in to small quantities.
- Giving a small fibre-based feed 30 minutes before exercise.
- Reducing stressful situations.

### **Pictures from recent cases**

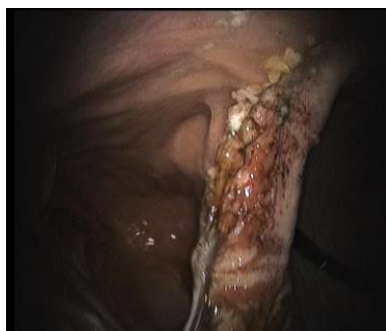
The horses in the pictures below initially presented with changes in performance, sensitivity on girthing and general discomfort around the abdominal area when being groomed. After treatment these signs had resolved.



Squamous ulceration pre-treatment.



Squamous ulceration post-treatment.



Squamous ulceration pre-treatment.



Squamous ulceration pre-treatment.

If you are concerned that your horse may be displaying signs of Equine Gastric Ulcer Syndrome, please contact one of our Equine Vets for advice.