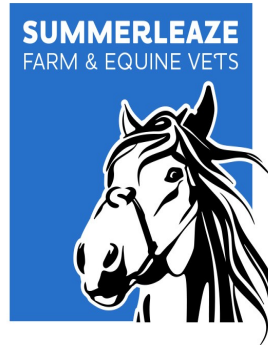


EQUINE NEWSLETTER

February 2021



Foot Abscesses

Although a very familiar topic for some, foot abscesses are an all too common occurrence at any time of the year and can appear to be quite worrying.

What are the signs of a foot abscess?

- Sudden onset of moderate to severe lameness,
- Resting foot/pointing toe
- Hot foot – especially the hoof wall
- Increased digital pulse
- Not wanting to stand
- Pus draining from coronary band or hoof.

Why are foot abscesses painful?

Foot abscesses are the accumulation of pus within the foot, often due to a sole penetration or infection running up the white line of the hoof. Due to the hoof wall encapsulating the hoof, there is nowhere for this pus to go, so the increased pressure on the other structures within the foot results in pain.

How do you diagnose a foot abscess?

Most foot abscesses are diagnosed by the history and the clinical findings. Careful examination of the horse's sole of the foot, hoof, coronet band and frog are required. Hoof testers are often used to locate them. It is often necessary to remove a horse's shoe to find an abscess.

Sometimes the foot needs to be poulticed for a few days before the abscess can be found. And in some circumstances x-rays may need to be taken to identify particularly deep abscesses.

How are Abscesses treated?

In most cases the treatment is to find and open the abscess so that it can drain. This immediately relieves the pressure and makes the horse more comfortable. This can be painful to do and your vet may need to use sedation or even local anaesthesia if particularly deep. Sometimes letting the abscess "burst naturally" has been advocated but this often happens at the coronet band and can cause large amounts of damage in the process so we do not advise this. Abscesses can be extremely painful and often require urgent treatment even at a weekend or evening.



What can I do to stop my horse getting foot abscesses?

Regular farriery/hoof trimming is essential to ensure best possible hoof quality. Diet is also a factor, with horses needing a balanced diet of vitamins and minerals. Some horses can benefit from biotin in their diet. It is also important to regularly pick out your horse's feet and if possible try to avoid your horse standing in wet mud 24/7.

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How do you poultice a foot?

First you need to clean your horse's hoof thoroughly, and if possible, avoid the foot being too wet. Cut the poultice down to the required size (if you continually poultice the whole foot you risk the horse's sole becoming softer and thrush developing). Soak the poultice in warm water, squeeze out any excess water, and then press it into the sole of the foot, keeping the plastic on the outside. If there is also bruising present, you can then wrap cotton wool around the poultice and hoof to help cushion the hoof. This cotton wool can then be wrapped in vetrap to hold it in place. Otherwise you just hold the poultice in place by wrapping the hoof with vetrap. The base of the foot can then be covered in duct tape to try to keep to the foot dry. Ideally the horse should then be kept in a stable in a deep bed.

Should equines with foot abscesses have pain relief?

Absolutely, when an animal is in pain it is very important for their welfare to try and reduce any discomfort. However, the best treatment for an abscess is for it to be opened to drain and we do not advise long courses of pain relief prior to treatment.

Should foot abscesses have antibiotics?

The vast majority of foot abscesses do not require any antibiotics.

If my farrier has found a foot abscess should I ring my vet?

If your farrier feels that they have successfully released the foot abscess and they have no concerns, then there is no need to consult a vet, however if you or they have any concerns we are always happy to discuss things over the phone.

Should I be concerned if my horse keeps getting foot abscesses?

Some horses seem to get more foot abscesses than others due to foot conformation however it can also be indicative of underlying issues. It can be due to Cushings disease, so older horses with recurrent abscesses are worth blood sampling for this condition. Horses with changes to their pedal bone can also be more predisposed to foot abscesses this can include those with laminitis but also those with neoplastic structures such as keratomas. To rule these out we may suggest doing x-rays.



Do all horses feel foot abscesses?

Some horses are definitely more stoical than others and so the first one knows of a foot abscess is when it has burst out. Horses that have had front limb neurectomies may also not feel foot abscesses so for these horses good hoof hygiene is essential.

You are invited to our **virtual client event**




Join the vets at the practice to find out all you need to know about **keeping your horse's respiratory system healthy this winter**, all from the comfort of your own home.

- ✔ How to identify the signs and causes of respiratory disease
- ✔ How to improve your horse's respiratory health and performance
- ✔ Opportunity to ask your vets all your questions

Thursday 25th February 2021 at 7pm

To register, please go to
https://boehringer.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_A3V-W0YvRsK-gm6GJTz8A



Baby News

Jacqueline Mara Anne Milner-Matthews born at 5lb 6oz at two minutes past midnight on 12th November.

Antonia will be returning to work on Monday 22nd February 2021.