

February 2020

Equine Newsletter



Sweet Itch Vaccine and Foot abscesses

What is sweet itch?

Sweet itch is an allergic reaction to midge bites, causing the horse or pony to feel itchy. It is most common from March through to October and many affected animals will show no clinical signs during winter months. Affected animals will commonly itch more around their mane, tail and head but can itch all over. This itching can result in loss of mane and tail, areas of baldness, wounds and skin infections. The horses may damage stables and fencing in their determination to itch. Sweet itch can have a big impact on a horse's quality of life.

When do horses develop sweet itch?

Horses typically develop sweet itch as youngsters between the ages of 1 and 5 years old. Unfortunately the condition can worsen with age.

How can you diagnose sweet itch?

Diagnosis is usually made on clinical signs but can be confirmed with allergen testing.

How can you prevent sweet itch?

Traditionally the key factor to prevent horses with sweet itch is prevention; preventing the midges being able to bite the horse. This is achieved usually with sweet itch rugs, avoiding turning out during the peak midge times, dusk and dawn. Fly repellents containing permethrin or pyrethroid can also be used. It is important with sweet itch to prevent the horse becoming itchy and to stop the cycle starting. Some horses may require the use of anti-itch shampoos or medications, such as antihistamines or steroids, to keep their sweet itch under control. There is some suggestion that feeding omega oils can aid skin health thus helping sweet itch.



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What else can we do for sweet itch?

VACCINATE!

The practice is now offering a sweet itch vaccination to try to help these itchy horses. The vaccination is a relatively new development but there are some promising studies into its effectiveness.

The vaccination involves two injections a fortnight apart, ideally before the onset of any clinical signs. We recommend injecting between February and March just before the fly population increases. The vaccine works by blocking the release of histamine thus preventing the itch/scratch cycle from the outset. The cost of the vaccine is very similar to a new Boett rug at approximately £150. If you are interested in vaccinating your horse against sweet itch please call the practice for more information.

NEW FACES



Luke Poore MA Msc VetMBCertES/Orth MRCVS

We welcome Luke to the equine vet team. He is a very experienced clinician and specialises in lameness and surgery. Luke is an Advanced Practitioner in Equine Surgery (Orthopaedics). Luke has extensive experience expanding across first opinion practice but also expanding in more depth across orthopaedics, soft tissue surgery, and large animal emergency critical care. He has performed significant research in these topics, also focusing on minimally invasive large animal surgery and the development of new surgical techniques. Luke has worked predominately as an equine vet in a variety of hospitals and practices, including Head of the Clinical Veterinary Services at the Donkey Sanctuary and head of the Equine Medicine and Surgery Departments at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Whilst working in South Africa he was also responsible for working with local wildlife so feel free to question him about the more challenging aspects of operating on rhinoceros!

Bryony Marshallsay

Bryony will be joining us to help Amy assist the vets and with all the prep and cleaning required to keep the clinical area of the practice looking so good. She will be doing a NVQ level 2 in equine groom. Bryony is used to horses and sheep as she has her own flock and rides her horse.

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