

# September newsletter

## Nervous horses

The vast majority of horses are easy to do everything with, which considering their size and athletic ability is always quite amazing but there are a few individuals who are more nervous than others be that with vets, farriers or for husbandry tasks such as clipping.

Unfortunately for most horses the only experiences horses get with vets is when they are either seeing us for routine care involving needles or during times of emergency, as a result they can become quite nervous of vets. Even those who are normally very quiet for vets, can at times of distress become difficult.



### If I know my equine is nervous about needles and vets what should I do?

When booking your horse/pony or donkey in for a visit it is important to let us know that they are nervous. This enables us to pre-prepare the vet and potentially book more time for the visit. Depending on how nervous your equine is it may also be worth considering oral sedation before the visit, please contact us to discuss this if you feel this would be helpful. If we know a horse is nervous, we may also change our needle choice or use a small amount of local anaesthetic before injecting the horse. Different distractions methods also work well with different horses, some are happy being injected whilst eating, for others wither scratches are enough to distract them. If you have seen a method that works well for your horse, please let us know as we are very happy to work with your horse.

### Is it possible to book a female vet if my horse is better with women?

At time of booking of routine appointments, it is possible to make requests for which vets would you like, however for emergencies we are limited to the person who is working or closest. But all our vets deal with horses in a calm quiet manner and are confident around horses.

### Where should I stand when my horse is being injected?

At the moment with covid 19, if possible we prefer horses to be tied up to be injected, however if you know your horse will respond negatively to be injected, please hold your horse the same side as the vet. This means if the horse is to react to the needle it is easier to turn them away from both you and the vet. It is also important to stand to the side of the horse to ensure that if a horse throws a leg forward or rears, they will not accidentally strike you. If your horse is nervous about injections, it is also important to minimise the number of people around, particularly children, to avoid anyone getting hurt. We would also ask that when our vets are examining or treating your horse if you could refrain from using your phone.

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## What can I do to desensitise my horse to injections?

Getting your horse used to being approached by several people can be really helpful and stroking, brushing and touching them all over can make it seem more normal when the vet comes to examine them. When injecting the neck we pick up a small skin pinch before we inject, it can help if you can practice doing this at home. To perform injections into the vein we use the jugular vein in the neck, in order to do this we have to use one hand to raise the vein and inject with the other, if you can also try practising this it can also help keep horses calm when we have to do it at visits. Some horses also react to the sight of stethoscopes if you have a cheap one to hand or a children's one it can be worth desensitising them to one, as it means at visits we are more likely to get an accurate reflection of their true heart rate.



If your horse is very nervous to handle it may be worth talking to us about different behaviourists and trainers who may be able to help.

## If my horse is ok with vets but not good at having its feet picked up for the farrier is there any thing you can do?

We routinely sedate horses for different farriers. This may be due to the horses being very green or nervous, having a pain aspect or a behavioural quirk. This can either be done by a vet attending the farrier appointment and giving an injection of sedation, with the vet then able to top up the horse as needed. For equines under our care we can also sell oral sedation which needs to be given prior to the farrier visit. With some horses it is possible to start initially with injecting sedation and then over several farrier visits lower the dose and gradually move them on to oral sedation, lowering the dose over time and weaning them off sedation completely. Some horses may need a one off sedation to allow shoeing post a significant period of box rest or if they have foot pain such as due to an abscess.

## Will you sedate horses for clipping?

We are very happy to come and sedate horses for clipping and if you have a very nervous horse this may be the best approach as the amount of sedation can be varied to meet the horses needs. We can also provide oral sedation for equines in our care but these horses must have been seen recently enough for us to be confident we can prescribe safely. If desirable, we can also try to join visits for clipping with other routine work such as vaccines or dentals.

## Welcome to our new vet **Hannah Mason**

We are very excited to be expanding our team and welcoming the lovely Hannah.

Hannah graduated from the university of Edinburgh and has spent the last 2 years working in Australia in referral hospitals and doing first opinion work. She is excited about all areas of general practice but particularly enjoys equine medicine with a special area of interest in neonatology. (foals)

Hannah is excited about life in Devon as she enjoys hiking, running and is keen to continue her goal from Australia of learning to surf!



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