

Your Healthy Horse Source



Fall 2009

From the Desk of
Dr. Jeff Bunn

What's New

Fall Recommendations

- Semi-annual vaccination of Calvenza & Strangles
- Deworm with an ivermectin product.
- Dental Care
- Install tank heaters before the snow flies.
- Enroll in Wellness Program.

Inside this issue:

Dr. van Wessum	2
Pain Management	2
4-H Scholarship	3
Housekeeping	4

I hope that every one of you is enjoying the fall season! The fall with all its colors and refreshing temperatures is most enjoyable, even if it has been a little wet!

Once again I have to report that Dr. Shaarda will be adding to his family in December. This will make four children under the age of 4! We will continue to pray for his wife, and we ask that you do the same!

Not to be outdone, Dr. Rubie has added to her family as well. As I reported in the last newsletter of the unfortunate death of her beloved pet "Dot", Dr. Rubie has moved on. She has since acquired a Parson Terrier named Olive and a Heinz 57 Terrier Cross, named "Riff", from Vicki's Pet Connection last winter.

Dr. Shaarda attended an intensive course sponsored by the AAEP this fall on Ophthalmology. He learned the most up to date procedures, both medically and surgically, for horse eye care. We have the ability to provide exceptional diagnostic and therapeutic care here at our clinic. It was a great opportunity to make connections with the best equine ophthalmologists in the nation.

In 2010, Dr. Rubie will begin a course in Equine Acupuncture from the Chi Institute in Reddick Florida. It is the leading veterinary continuing education provider of Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine (TCVM). The mission of the Chi Institute is to train licensed veterinarians to become cutting edge animal health care providers, capable of practicing veterinary acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine and other TCVM skills. The course will begin in February runs through August. Dr. Rubie is looking forward to integrating this aspect in to conventional veterinary medical care.

Dr. Bunn has recently been installed as the President of the Michigan Equine Practitioners Association. The Michigan Veterinary Medical Association has requested that he represent the MVMA on a committee sponsored by the Humane Society of the US in regards to the unwanted horse in Michigan. The unwanted horse population is soaring with no solutions in sight.

Welcome Dr. Rob van Wessum



We are pleased to announce our recent partnership with Dr. Rob van Wessum, formally from MSU's College of Veterinary Medicine, as a lameness consultant. As many of you know, Dr. van Wessum is known for his exceptional skills in lameness evaluation and diagnosis, especially with horses in the Dressage discipline. If you would be interested in having your horse evaluated, he is currently available on Wednesdays by appointment only at Equine Medical.

Pain Management

Pain management is the new "buzz" word in the horse world. I don't know if it's truly a "buzz" word or perhaps we are more aware of its importance. We as veterinarians find it frustrating to see horses that have suffered because either the owner was unaware of the horse's pain or was reluctant to treat the pain for fear of possibly causing more serious issues or potential side effects of the medication.

"For our purposes, we will classify pain into two classes: acute or chronic."

In order to understand the importance of pain in horses, one needs to be aware of the evolutionary history of the equine species. Anyone who has spent much time in the saddle is intimately aware of the relationship between horses and their "pre-historic" hard wired brain. By understanding that the equine species was hunted by other predatory animals, one can certainly appreciate the horse's fundamental characteristics of fight or flight. One must also realize that "man" is a **predator**. This explains why the horse was the last of all the domestic species to be domesticated!

Temple Grandin in her book "*Animals in Translation*" gives one example of the prey – predator relationship. In her book she tells of a feedlot steer that exhibits a definite lameness, which is only observed while she is hidden within an observation room. However, when she walks into the lot so that the steer (prey) can actually see her (the predator), the lameness is miraculously gone! She then goes on to theorize that this ability to "cover up" pain, is a protective, instinctual behavior that has evolved over millennia. Simply put, it is easier for a mountain lion to have the lame cow for dinner versus one that is not lame. I believe that this same theory holds true to horses as well.



For our purposes we will classify pain into two classes: acute or chronic. Acute pain is that seen at the onset. It is the horse with colic, or the severely cut leg, or the hoof abscess. In chronic pain, the sharpness is not so intense, but uncomfortable none the less. Examples of chronic pain would be the horse with navicular disease, osteoarthritis, or intra-oral gum disease. How should we treat these types of pain? In the acute stage, direct desensitization of the nerves involved in pain sensation (i.e. a local *Lidocaine* shot) is the most direct way and then by combining that with a centrally acting pain killer (one that numbs the pain sensing nerves of the brain, i.e. *Dormosedan*), we as veterinarians are able to offer complete pain control. As an example, this combina-

tion of treating peripheral and central pain is how pain can best be controlled during all dental procedures. Who is to say that even though a horse is not resisting us during a dental that he/she is not feeling pain?

Because they are so good at hiding it, chronic pain is the most difficult type of malady we as humans can diagnose in our equine patients. Often times the first thing horses will exhibit are some form of misbehavior, especially in equine athletes that perform repetitive actions. It is typically some form of resistance behavior, i.e. they swish their tail, pin their ears, refuse a jump, duck away from a pattern, refuse a barrel, misbehave for the farrier, etc... Certain disciplines and/or conformational attributes make certain horses more susceptible to certain problems. The most economical and best pain killer for most maladies is the prescription medication "*Bute*". *Phenylbutazone* (a.k.a. Bute) is in a class of drugs known as non-steroidal *anti-inflammatories* that as a class, have been shown to initiate the formation of stomach ulcers. It is important to understand that Bute is first and foremost an anti-inflammatory, and therefore by nature controls pain by reducing inflammation. In controlled university studies, *Bute* has been shown to be the most potent and economical medication for the reduction of pain and inflammation in the horse, especially for controlling orthopedic pain. It is unfortunate that this wonderful drug has received such bad press. Many a lame horse has suffered needlessly for fear of causing stomach ulcers! Even though I am sure that it happens, I can not remember the last time I diagnosed a horse with stomach ulcers secondary to *Bute* administration. For that matter, I wonder how many horses develop stomach ulcers secondary to suffering from chronic pain!

Ideally, a specific diagnosis as to the cause of the pain by a veterinarian should be attempted. This in turn would hopefully decrease the possibility of future injury and specifically target the area of concern for treatment.

No matter what the situation. If your horse is exhibiting some form of misbehavior or showing some form of resistance, call us! It is possible a quick consult with one of our doctors may be the first step in helping out! After all, we know the history of your horse, their home environment, and the medical knowledge to make the best recommendations for your horse's health.

Would you like to save some green?

Do you know about our client referral program?

We will send you a gift certificate for \$10 off your next bill when you refer a new client to us that makes an appointment!

"It's a lot like nuts and bolts—if the rider's nuts, the horse bolts!"

The Horse Whisperer

4-H Scholarship

We are extremely proud of our latest Kent County 4-H Scholarship winner, Rebecca Fry. Rebecca is currently a sophomore at Hope College. She is a intelligent, well rounded young lady with a bright future ahead of her.

If you are interested in applying for the 2010 Scholarship, contact the Kent County Extension office.

We're on

facebook

Check us out!

Housekeeping

PROUD MEMBER OF



Michigan Equine
Practitioners Association

- Joyce is busy making preparations for our annual client educational seminar which will be on Sunday January 24th from 1:00-4:00 pm at the Lowell Middle School. This years topics will be parasites & vaccines. Parasitism is the most common disease of horses today. It is also one of the most costly and damaging diseases which is omnipresent in the equine population. Dr. Wendy Vaala from Intervet will be presenting the latest information regarding deworming strategies and how you can help prevent resistance to dewormers.
- Winter and colic go hand in hand. By offering an adequate amount of good quality hay, and fresh, free choice water, you can reduce your likelihood of dealing with a colic episode dramatically.
- Enrollment for our Equine Wellness Program will begin on January 1, 2010. Please call or visit our website for more details about our unique program that includes basic vaccinations, wellness exams, a dental, a fecal exam, blood work, a complete deworming program, and a discount should your horse require hospitalization and/or surgery for colic treatment.
- We want you as a fan on Facebook. Check us out today!
- As a note to all of our clients that are using the product "Assure" to manage their horses with sand colitis: You can receive a 5% discount when ordering if you use our clinic code: PRP – 64430. You can order it on the web site: www.arenus.com.

We take the welfare of your horses very seriously. By constantly improving our technology, facilities, and our education, we hope to provide you with the best veterinary care and customer service that is available in West Michigan. I would like to thank everyone for their continued faith and trust in us.

God Bless,

The Staff at Equine Medical LLC



633 Lincoln Lake Ave SE
Lowell MI 49331

Phone: 616-897-2615
Fax: 616-897-3045
www.equinemedical.com