

SPRING 2008

FROM THE DESK OF DR. JEFF BUNN

Hi everyone! It's time again for "Equine Health News according to Dr. Bunn"! I hope that all of you have survived this cold, long winter without too many complications. I know that both my horses and I are ready to enjoy some more moderate weather.

WHAT'S NEW

Here at the office things have actually been pretty "normal". Of course that's a relative term which is subject to multiple interpretations, relative to whom you should ask! On the personnel front, Joyce promised me that she is not going to have any babies this spring, which is a big relief! However, Dr. Shaarda will be expecting his third in August. Dixie is still mending her ribs, but we can tell that she is feeling much better, she's laughing much more! Erin and Lindsay are busy riding their own horses at home. Dr. Rubie is busy keeping her dogs in line. Linne is busy running our daughter all over creation (it truly will be nice when she gets her drivers license next year). As for me, I'm just trying to stay out of everyone's way! Not very successfully I may add.

We upgraded our small endoscope this year, so that we can obtain a much clearer and improved image on the videoscope. For those of you that don't know what I'm talking about, an endoscope is a fiber optic instrument that allows us to look inside a horse's body parts (lungs, nasal cavity, bladder, stomach, etc.). With today's abilities to electronically send information, we can digitally capture these endoscopic images and have them reviewed by "experts" to better diagnose the problem at hand.

We also acquired a "periodontal unit" last year. This handy little gizmo allows us to perform more advanced dental procedures than we were previously capable of doing. My staff refers to it as the "Seuss machine", after the famed Dr. Seuss' many contraptions. With this equipment, I can deep clean diseased crevasses that occur between mal-aligned teeth and inflamed gums. It also allows me to drill and fill cavities. I've had a number of clients for whom I have performed these procedures (on their horses of course). They have told me that once the procedure was done, their horse is definitely more comfortable with eating and has a much better attitude.

On a business note, last week while I was traveling back and forth from the stallion expo, I had the displeasure of filling my diesel tank, and decided to do something about it! Immediately Monday morning I decreased our **office call** price from **\$30.00 to \$15.00!** Unfortunately, I couldn't do the same for "farm call" prices, just too much overhead associated with the trucks. We've also extended some of our hours to better accommodate our working clients. We also did NOT raise our vaccine prices from last year, in spite of increasing costs.

EDUCATION

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the 300 folks who attended our annual client education seminar in January. Dr. Christine Skelly from Michigan State University spoke on the topic of managing horses on small acreage. We had a record number of door prizes that were given away and a wonderful lunch, thanks to Joyce's hard work! I hope to see everyone again at next year's seminar, topics to be

announced later. Along this same line, I was honored to speak at this year's 25th Michigan Stallion Expo, on the topic of equine dentistry. I was joined by many of my fellow colleagues and was able to offer a lively lecture on Saturday and a "live" demonstration on Sunday. The amazing thing was having four veterinarians in one room, all able to agree on one topic! That will probably never happen again!

Since my last writing, I have attended the annual American Association of Equine Practitioners meeting and convention, in Orlando, Florida. This is by far one of the best continuing education opportunities an equine veterinarian can attend. With attendance at so many lectures, I'm just going to cover the highlights.

One of the most intriguing talks was on the practice of performing "flank" exploratory laporotomies. This is a procedure, whereby the veterinarian performs abdominal surgery, on the standing, sedated patient. The surgical approach is through the left flank of the horse, which gains excess (limited compared to a more traditional ventral approach) to the contents of the abdominal cavity. The procedure is most often employed on the draft breeds, due to their dramatically increased complication rate associated with general anesthesia. Because 80% of all colics involve displacements or impactions of the large colon, this approach offers a novel therapeutic approach, and at the same time reducing the expense and complications associated with general anesthesia, and a ventral abdominal incision.

I also attended a lecture on the placement of "home made" stainless steel staples over abnormal growth plates in foals, as a means to correct crooked legs. The procedure is quick, relatively inexpensive, and carries very few complications.

While there I had the great pleasure of listening to Dr. Dean Richardson; the surgeon that worked so tirelessly on Barbaro's fractured leg. The lecture hall which had a capacity of 2000 individuals had standing room only! It was refreshing to listen to a now famous equine orthopedic surgeon fight off tears as he was describing their ultimate decision to euthanize the 2006 Kentucky Derby winner. We truly are a profession which practices with their hearts!

WHAT DO MY HORSES NEED?

Recently I attended a lecture given by Dr. Doug Byers, one of the most respected Equine Internists in the business, speak on emerging diseases within the equine industry. The one thing he mentioned which was most "eye opening" to me was the emergence of parasite resistance to our common dewormers. According to his research and experience, central Kentucky is experiencing more and more cases of parasite related diseases. The take home message was that we are probably "over worming" our horses by administering a dewormer every two months, and that most farms only need to have the horses dewormed on a quarterly basis with a purge dewormer (paste). He emphasized the importance of an annual "fecal" exam, where a few fecal balls are evaluated for parasite eggs. We perform this test in the office and find that many times horses which have been on a stringent deworming program by their owner or the farm will have parasite eggs in their manure. The fecal test also allows us to identify the species of parasite, and therefore be more specific in choosing a more appropriate dewormer to effectively kill the parasite(s) in question.

The American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP), our umbrella organization, has recently published their recommendations for "core" vaccines. They are: Eastern, Western Encephalitis, Tetanus, West Nile, and Rabies. You can read more by clicking on their web site: www.aaep.org. Our recommendations for our specific area include all of these with the addition of Potomac Horse Fever. To see our full set of recommended vaccinations, I encourage you to visit our web site at: www.equinemedical.com, on "the things you should know" page. As an aside, we also have a link on the first page of our web site that you can print and use to help us send accurate information to the lab for your Coggins testing. Please take the time to fill this form out, as it greatly helps us in expediting your Coggins!

DR. BUNN'S SOAPBOX

While preparing for this newsletter, I was having a difficult time coming up with a topic to discuss (believe it or not), but settled on the idea of laminitis (founder). As difficult as this topic would be to cover in a paragraph, I am going to try to impress upon you the challenges we face when treating these cases. With spring upon us, and green grass about to grow, I'm certain that I will be treating a few cases this year.

Laminitis is a devastating disease that affects the hooves of horses, typically most severely the fore hooves. The disease results in detachment of the cornified hoof wall (nail) from the underlying sensitive structures, resulting in tremendous pain and discomfort. The disease often leaves its victims debilitated and in chronic pain for the rest of their lives. The amount of pain that a horse suffers from this disease was best described by one of my college professors: "Imagine hitting both of your thumb nails with a hammer, and then having to walk on them!" Obviously, we still do not have a sound treatment option that works, if we did "Barbaro" would be alive today! The key is prevention! Many horses that are overweight have a higher likelihood of developing laminitis. If you can see a crest on their neck, or fatty bumps over their tail head, they are prime candidates. Some breeds are more susceptible as well. For instance we know that Morgans and Donkeys are at a higher risk than other breeds of developing laminitis. Often times these patients are known to be "easy keepers". In other words, they can get fat on air. I'm sure that if we took a closer look at these horses, we would probably find that they suffer from some hormonal imbalance that makes them this way, for example either "Cushings Disease" or "Insulin Resistance". If we are lucky enough to diagnose them early, there are medications available to help manage these diseases. I also believe that diet and exercise are important in management as well. There currently are commercial feeds available that are reduced in carbohydrates and sugar content. There are also grazing muzzles available for those patients that have the pleasure of grass pastures. These management techniques aid us in our ability to manipulate diet, but how do we increase exercise, especially if we have a painful patient? Pain management with anti-inflammatory medication is very important as well. Pain can also be managed with proper foot support. Even though there are a number of different ways to provide that support, I've come to like the use of "wooden clogs".



Dr. Mike Stewart of Oklahoma, came up with the idea of applying 1 ½ "of plywood to the bottom of a founder horse's hoof with deck screws. Sounds crazy, but when applied correctly, has amazing results. For the last year, I've been using these homemade "Stewart Clogs" on all my laminitic cases, and have found them to be extremely versatile and useful. If we can manage the horse's pain with proper hoof support and medication, and manage their diet, we greatly improve our chances of saving them from a life long endurance of chronic pain.

HOUSE KEEPING

It is greatly appreciated when you have your horses caught or stalled when our doctors arrive. Not only does this help us in our attempts to being prompt to our appointments, but it also helps us in our efforts to get home to our families at a decent time!

As mentioned previously, it is also helpful if you have downloaded the Coggins form from our web site and filled in the appropriate information. This greatly helps us complete the lab work in an efficient and expeditious manner.

Have a great spring!

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Linne Bunn

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