

Your Healthy Horse Source



Winter 2011

From the Desk of
Dr. Jeff Bunn

Recommendations

- **Enroll in Wellness Program.**
- **Fecal Exam followed by deworming with the proper product.**
- **Dental Care**
- **Ensure your horse has access to water throughout these cold winter months.**

Inside this issue:

Dr. Bunn's Soapbox	1
Wellness Program	3
Calendar	4

What's New

Hello winter! Yes, it's that time of year again when we tend to put our horses away for the season. Winter can be a refreshing time of the year, time to organize or read that book you have on the nightstand. I intend to enjoy it!

In regards to what has been going on around here, we've been quite active in our pursuit of continuing education. Consistent with our efforts to continually improve our veterinary knowledge, we have all participated in recent educational opportunities:

Dr. Shaarda recently attended a short course at Colorado State University on Arthroscopic Surgery. This course was taught by some of the countries leading experts on equine joint disease and therapeutic modalities for treatment.

Dr. Rubie is enrolled in an Equine Chiropractic course in Kansas City, Kansas. This course is a year in length with classes held one week, every month until completion. This should be a nice compliment to her certification in equine acupuncture.

As for myself, I attended the annual American Association of Equine Practitioners Meeting in San Antonio, Texas. This meeting provided a lot of new cutting-edge information.

Our technician, Erin, has recently produced some "how to" *you tube* videos that will be linked to our web page. Including: How to wrap a leg; How to apply medication to a horse's eye; How to administer oral medications (and not wear them); How to apply a hoof wrap. If there are any other "how to" videos you would like to have us produce, please call and let us know.

Joyce and Erin also attended a course at MSU on improving their ability to detect parasites in fecal samples. We really believe in the fecal exams and hope that you will take advantage of this service before you purchase a deworming product. Contact Erin or Joyce if you have questions about collecting a fecal sample.

Dr. Bunn's Soapbox

An old horse was given a comfortable retirement for all the work and pleasure he had given to his owner. The owner accepted his responsibilities as a good horseman seriously. It was the horseman's opinion that after years of faithful service from his "friend", it was now his task and his duty as a responsible owner, to make the twilight years of the horse's life the best he could.

It the early years they traveled thousands of miles together, family in tow; competing all over the country. The truck & trailer would leave after work on Fridays, drive most of the night to reach their destination, compete and then drive all night on Sunday to return home and to work. Now "Old Yeller" was not the easiest horse to ride! He sure enough had is own little quirks. For one, if you valued your life, you best leave your spurs in the truck. He was known to get a little "brony" at the most inopportune times! Like while "in chase", standing high in the saddle, if a spur should accidentally poke his belly. Once, his reaction was so violent that the rider, in the blink of an eye recalls one minute standing high in the saddle running at warp speed, and the next lying on the ground underneath his horse's front legs. And in that



**Savings Tip for
the Season:**
Enroll in the
Wellness
Program and
save 10% off
additional
services this
calendar year.

micro second, between ejection and landing, when time seems to travel at a crawl, the rider had one thought: *“this is going to leave a mark!”* And like most riders it took more than one of these first hand experiences to convince him that spurs should **not** be used on this particular mount or at least have a government warning printed on them: *“The surgeon general has determined that inappropriate use of spurs on an unappreciative gelding is hazardous to your health!”*

The old curmudgeon had another most unappreciative habit, one of displaying distaste for excessive pressure on the steering mechanism! Being of the AA personality type, he was not one to let the grass grow under his hooves. There was no pleasure in taking *Yeller* for a trail ride. The pilot must maintain a firm grip on the reins, often with the roping reins doubled in his hands with a good 12 inches of slack extending beyond his grip. During any leisurely trail ride, *Yeller* would have his neck arched like a Lipizzaner stallion, mouth wide open and gaping. The whole while pulling at the reins, yanking the slack repeatedly out of the riders hand, prancing with hope and anticipation of galloping at full speed across the field. Unfortunately, even though he may acted as though he were a Lipizzaner stallion, the ride was more like that of a 1940’s Jeep across a bomb shelled battle field at 30mph. But once the reins were released, and the accelerator pressed, he did love to run! Of course in the particular discipline in which he competed, not only did he have to go from zero to 35mph in two jumps, but also needed to make a controlled stop with all four legs and proceed to take two steps back. He was good at his job; so good that he did not accept assistance or criticism well. In competitions, once the trigger was pulled there was no retrieving the bullet. Once at a competition, the rider prematurely asked for *Yeller* to fire and fire he did. Unfortunately, the start was too fast and a penalty would be assessed if the brakes weren’t applied soon. Reflexively the rider drew back on the reins, and instead of getting the desired response of a complete and sudden stop he instead experienced a *Levade* (dressage move by which the horse walks on their hind limbs) and finished with a *Capriole* (a dressage move by which the horse appears to lunge forward). Being that this competition was a timed event with a rather stiff entry fee, the rider found no amusement in this display of defiance. It was determined never to touch the brakes again once the ship was underway!

Although traumatic, these memories are viewed with happiness and remembrance as a time of much joy. Unfortunately, as *Yeller* has aged, his bones and joints expressed their wear and tear. Maintaining his weight became an ever challenging aspect of his health. For him eating was not a necessity but rather a necessary hindrance of his daily routine. It was not uncommon for him to eat half his senior feed ration, only to have his attention distracted by some nearby wandering deer. His pasture mate was all too happy when this occurred, for he did not share the same curiosity and instead enthusiastically cleaned up any and all feed left over from *Yeller’s* inattentiveness. *Yeller* spends most of his days staying close to his best buddy, with aging eyes and a wandering mind; it’s his long time friend that gives him the security he needs to live out his days without anxiety.

As you might now know, the preceding story is of my own experiences with my old roping horse, Bugs. As I’ve watched him age and sustain more and more difficulties with all that aging brings, I felt compelled to share this experience. I think that as horse owners, we often overlook the effects which aging plays on our horse’s mental/emotional capabilities. We are all too familiar with the effects aging has on the horse’s musculoskeletal system, and the onset and management of osteoarthritis. This in and of itself, is a significant stress to the older horse.

It has been my observation over the years of managing lame horses that the amount of time spent recumbent, lying down and resting is diminished as they age. I have also observed that the more serious the lameness, the more resistant the patient is to lie down. I surmise that this is due to the horse’s evolutionary survival instincts. I believe that horses are “hardwired” to resist recumbency, especially when their perceived ability to flee a potential predator is greatly compromised due to musculoskeletal problems. I also believe that this is manifested in the horse’s unique ability to sleep standing up. Unfortunately, all mammals need “REM” (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep, to maintain health. It is during this time of “REM” sleep that scientists have determined dreams occur in people. After observing my horses’ leg movements and quiet vocalizations while recumbent, I am certain that horses experience dreams as well. Unfortunately “REM” sleep can only be achieved with total muscle relaxation and recumbency. Human studies have shown that “REM” sleep deprivation can lead to other health problems;



narcolepsy being one example. I am convinced that this is also true in horses, especially in those horses that tend to have a type "A" personality. I have personally witnessed a number of horses that were mentally/physically exhausted, including my own, having a narcoleptic attack. Fortunately for me, by increasing the amount of fatty acids (which are important for brain function) in my horse's diet, and better controlling his musculoskeletal pain with anti-inflammatories, he has not had any narcoleptic attacks since late summer.

The reason for this dissertation of mine is to perhaps increase awareness to not only my older patients' musculoskeletal issues but also their mental/emotional needs as well. Often times these two issues are inter-related and need to be addressed as such. To best manage our geriatric horses golden years, it is imperative that we do all we can to reduce their stress whether it is real or perceived, because like people, they have a hard time discerning the difference.

Wellness Program

Did you have an equine emergency this past year? Did you know you could have saved 10% of the bill if your horse had been enrolled in our Wellness Program?

Once again we are offering our annual Wellness Program to our valued clients. For those that are unaware of what our Wellness Program is; it is a way for horse owners to prepay for a years worth of preventative care at significant savings. This year our "Wellness Program" includes:

- A comprehensive annual physical exam.
- Immunizations:
 - Eastern and Western Encephalomyelitis
 - Tetanus Toxoid
 - Potomac Horse Fever
 - Rabies
 - West Nile Encephalomyelitis
- An annual dental prophylaxis in the fall including sedation and reversal of sedation.
- A fecal exam will be performed at both the spring and fall visit. The fecal exam includes a parasite egg count and an evaluation for the presence of sand in the abdomen.
- **Any and all additional services provided by our veterinarians during the enrollment period are 10% off, including but not limited to:**
 - Additional farm calls*
 - Emergency fees*
 - Additional vaccinations*
 - Lameness Evaluations/Radiographs*
 - Blood work including Coggins testing*
 - Interstate Health Papers*
 - Endoscopy*
 - Select Reproductive Services*
 - Surgery*

Dewormers are not be included, so that we may tailor a program for your specific needs.

If you enroll by **January 31st, 2012**, the cost will be the same as last year, \$370.00 for the first horse enrolled and \$280.00 for each additional horse per owner.

After January 31st, the price will be \$385.00 for the first horse and \$295.00 for additional horses.

The deadline for enrolling in the Wellness Program is March 1st, 2012. Please contact Erin for further information on the program.

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!

"Ask me to show you poetry in motion, and I will show you a horse."

We're on

facebook

Become Fan Today!

Calendar of Events

This year, we have decided to do something different in lieu of our annual client appreciation seminar. We have decided to host an open house . This is a great opportunity to come and visit with our veterinarians and staff. If you haven't been to our clinic before, come see what sets us apart from the other veterinarians in West Michigan. The date is January 22, from 1 pm to 4 pm. Please RSVP to Dixie or Joyce so we know how many snacks to have on hand.

We will be hosting a booth at the Delta Plex for the 1st annual West Michigan Winter Horse Fest. This will be held on December 3rd. Come see us!

Thank you for making us a part of your horse's team.

The Staff of Equine Medical.



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