

WARWICK EQUINE VETERINARIANS

185 BRACKER ROAD

WARWICK.

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Newsletter

- **Frank and Tiana's last week**
- **Building progress**
- **New Equipment**
- **Flexural deformity in a foal**

As always in life things are constantly changing. With Frank leaving at the end of this week, Tiana unfortunately had her role largely made redundant and she will be leaving us as well. Tiana has made a good contribution during the time she was with us giving Frank support and helping out at the Lona. She will continue her veterinary nurse training in our sister practice Condamine Veterinary Clinic focusing more on small animals. Joining us this month has been Danielle. Danielle lives near Canungra, breeds horses of her own, and has a degree in Equine Science. The plan is for Chaylee to ease up on the long Gold Coast days and for Danielle to help us on the days we work down the coast.

Over the next few months the surgery and new stables will be completed. Already we have started acquiring the myriad of equipment required. We are proceeding with the philosophy of setting up to do excellent work in all the procedures we undertake. There will remain some gaps and we will still have to refer some cases. For example the nearest MRI machine is in Sydney with the better unit situated in Melbourne. Similarly we have facilities for scintigraphy in Gatton (bone scan) with again the better unit being situated in Melbourne. Not having all the imaging gear at hand is a challenge at times, however, having been exposed to it extensively in the past does allow us to understand which cases justify the expense of using these procedures.



Our new arthroscopy and laparoscopy trolley and equipment is being assembled at Austvet in Melbourne. This equipment will allow us to do arthroscopic procedures both conventionally using fluid insufflation and under gas. It will also allow us to do a comprehensive range of laparoscopic procedures both standing and under general anaesthetic. We have also bought a foal and adult horse anaesthetic machine with ventilators to allow us to maintain all sizes of horses under anaesthetic in as safe a manner as current technology allows. This is just a small sample of the enormous amount of equipment

we are sourcing to allow us to feel confident we can do the best job possible on your horses.

The building is progressing well. Don and Bruce, our experienced builders, have nearly completed the roofing on the main building. We are still on track to being ready for surgery at the new facility in July or August this year.

The vision for the practice remains excellence in equine veterinary care. We will continue to provide veterinary care in the Warwick and surrounding areas to horses on farm, and to horses on the way to and from the Gold Coast for non-emergency issues on Tias' run on Thursdays. We will be increasing our focus on care at Lona, where our facilities will be. Tias will also continue to provide specialist surgical consultancy services to a range of equine practices around Queensland. As you can imagine, it is much more efficient for



us to work on horses at Lona so we are going to reflect that in the price. We will try and calculate what the cost difference to provide the services will be and it is envisaged most procedures will be somewhat cheaper when performed at the clinic.

A good example of where procedures need to be done on farm in exceptional circumstances is the case described on the next page. Surgery can in some cases be done in the field and the advantages are convenience to the owner in that the horse does not need to be brought into the clinic and in some cases less risk to the horse if travel or infectious diseases are issues. Some of the disadvantages are there is often less control of the environment so things like heat, cold, and even flies and dust can be issues, anaesthesia is limited to IV agents with oxygen supplementation, access to all gear in an emergency may not be available, post operative monitoring can be harder to manage, and sterility is more difficult to achieve. It is also generally much more stressful for the operating team as well, therefore often the best option is to send the horse to a facility.



Having said that with experienced surgeons and assistants, with careful planning and the right conditions good work can still be achieved in the field. Tias has performed a large range of procedures in the field over his career and if the circumstances dictate we will continue to offer this if it is in the best interests of the horse and its owner.

And lastly I would like to thank both Frank and Tiana for the hard work and help they have given us over the last year or so. We wish them all the best for the future and I am sure we will be able to keep you all updated with their news in times to come.



Our last dinner out together with Frank, Kelly, Lizzie and Tiana.

Tias

Hendra Vaccination Update

Great news that we learned this month is that the government has approved the Hendra vaccine to be used at 12 month intervals after the 3 loading doses. This will effectively halve the cost of vaccination for horse owners over time.

This is great news as it is becoming increasingly difficult for us to treat unvaccinated sick horses. We are happy to discuss what we can and can't safely do to horses and the pros and cons of Hendra vaccination with any of our clients.

Severe club foot or flexural deformity in a foal a complex case

Over the last few months we have been treating a Friesian foal. He was born to a really good mother and his early growth rate was very rapid.

The owners are very proactive and were aware that this might lead to excessive growth and there was the potential for flexural deformity. Therefore from birth they were carefully having their farrier trim the feet regularly, and used special shoes and complementary therapies to try and control his propensity for an excessively upright conformation during his early months. We also weaned this foal early to try and reduce his rapid growth rate by having better control of his diet.

This was progressing reasonably well, however, there was a sudden set back a couple of months ago when it appeared one forefoot quite quickly developed a severe flexural deformity. It was impossible for the colt to get his heel to the ground resulting in him walking on his toe. X-rays were taken to gain better understanding of what was going on.



These images showed the colt had an abnormality of his extensor process. It appears he had a separate fragment, probably a fracture of a growth abnormality which was likely causing pain.

Therefore, with less loading of the tendons in this leg these structures were rapidly contracting. When young growing horses have painful conditions of the limbs, bone growth often is not effected while tendons fail to elongate sufficiently if not continually loaded. This can result in a range of conditions and one of the more common was seen in this foal. In this case the foal developed a severe contracture of the deep digital flexor tendon (DDFT) resulting in a rapidly progressive club foot.

Surgery is an option for these but the owners were very reluctant to go down this path due to a negative experience with a similar surgery on another foal by another practitioner.

We elected to put a wedge under the foot and give pain relief. What we were attempting to achieve was reduce pain by temporarily unloading the DDFT to help reduce pain and over a period of weeks lower the heel with gradual stretching of the tendons.

This was attempted and the owners were diligent in provid-

ing physiotherapies as well as the the farriery care but unfortunately this foal did not respond sufficiently to this.



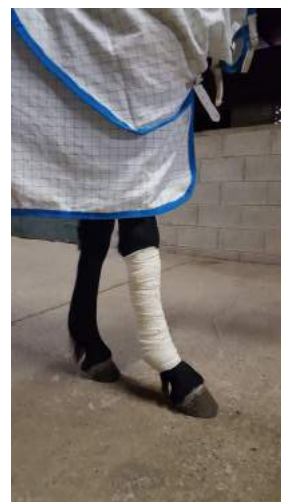
This photo illustrates how severe the contracture had become with the front of the hoof wall continually tilted forward.

Therefore we decided to schedule him for Tias to operate at Gold Coast Equine Clinic. Unfortunately he became very upset on his first float ride and tried to scramble out and injured himself before he had even left the property. By this

time it was decided surgery was urgent and with insufficient time left to train him to accept the float ride safely, we decided we would have perform the surgery on farm.

Our definite preference is to do this surgery in a proper operating theatre with good anaesthesia support and better control of sterility but good outcomes can be achieved in the field with care.

We operated this foal a few hours after his unfortunate floating experience in the paddock at his home and his recovery from this point has been excellent.



This is the most recent photo of the foot taken about 3 weeks after surgery. When you compare this to the image of the foot above it is easy to see how quickly a severe deformity can be reversed in these foals when the biomechanical basis of the problem is addressed.

In this case the main problem causing the deformity was pain which resulted in reduced loading of the DDFT

which then rapidly contracted in a foal which already had a tendency for contracture due to a combination of genetics and fast growth. The surgery, a check ligament desmotomy, allows a lengthening of the tendon and enabled the complementary treatment and farriery provided by his owners to work.

Warwick Equine Veterinarians

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Our goal is to provide excellence in clinical service to all our equine patients.

A professional, compassionate and caring approach with good communication, and up to date services.

Excellence in Equine Veterinary Care

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