

Newsletter

- **Foaling and breeding season**
- **Lameness**
- **Dystocia**
- **Oesophageal Choke**
- **Foreign body in the Tongue**



BREEDING, FOALS AND LAMENESS

The months pass so quickly by. This month we have been busy with Thoroughbred breeding and most dry mares now covered. The next “ready to run” Magic Millions sale will be up in a couple of weeks meaning lots of Xrays again for Chaylee and I.

As well as breeding we have seen lots of lameness cases. It is amazing the range of diagnoses we make. This month we had cases of arthritis of pastern, fetlocks, and hocks, stifle cysts, navicular bursitis, tendon sheath and tendon issues, pelvic stress fractures, bicipital bursa problems... the list is almost endless.

The way we treat these vary enormously and sometimes involves rest, sometimes complementary treatments like shockwave, physio, and manipulation, or medical treatments like intra-articular injections, stem cell treatments, and systemic medications. In some cases when there are surgical options we operate these with a wide

range of surgeries performed. Both Frank and I really enjoy the challenges of helping owners and riders get the most out of their horses and often this involves the management lameness issues.



This month we also managed an unfortunate dystocia problem in a mare. The mare was foaling and the foal lacerated the vagina causing a prolapse of the mare's intestines. By the time Frank and I were able to get there, which was not very long at all, the mare was beyond saving. Fortu-

nately we were able to do an emergency caesarian and deliver a live healthy colt foal. Fostering these is always a challenge but there was another mare on the property which was willing to take the orphan and as good an outcome as was possible in the circumstances was achieved.

Frank who manages WEV Facebook page posted as short piece on this foal and incredibly nearly half a million people viewed the photos.

Although there are ups and downs it is great to go to work each day and help people and their animals.

Tias and all the team at WEV

Frank had an interesting case recently. Pepper was a 25 year old mare which had developed choke. After extensive attempts both by the first vet and then us we were unable to budge the blockage.

We were able to determine there was an orange foreign body lodged in her oesophagus. Later we determined this was carrot and the rest of the mass was pizza base!

Older horses are prone to losing teeth and generally developing points and hooks which make it very difficult for them to chew effectively. The result of which can be choke, as in this case

with Pepper.

To resolve this, we reduced the spasm in the oesophagus and softened and the mass over 24 hours. We also had concerns over her lungs as unfortunately these cases often develop pneumonia as they can aspirate fluids into the lungs. Pepper was lucky though, in this case as antibiotics controlled the infection and scoping the next day did not reveal too much damage to the oesophagus at the obstruction site. A few weeks later we gave her teeth a good overhaul and thereby making a similar problem for her less likely in the future.



An endoscopic photo of the carrot lodged in the oesophagus. It is little hard to make out because it was under “water”. Really, under a mix of saliva and lavage fluids.

The value of vaccination

On Wednesday we had an interesting case. It involved a lovely quiet Quarter Horse mare called Smarty used for barrel racing. The evening before she was observed to be a little off her feed, eating very slowly and holding her head to the side. The next morning she was worse, doing all those things as well as drooling.

Sudden onset of symptoms which rapidly progress and neurological signs (for example head tilt, problems swallowing and drooling) are classic symptoms of Hendra virus infection. The examination of this mare was potentially dangerous because saliva and all body fluids are highly infectious in clinical cases of Hendra virus. We certainly could not have safely examined her mouth if she had not been vaccinated. Even with the best PPE it is very difficult to safely examine inside a mouth with teeth which can cut open protective gloves. In this case, we would have had to take samples and run a Hendra virus exclusion first before we could perform an invasive examination.

Luckily, Smarty was fully vaccinated. Even still we were careful in how we examined her. Firstly we checked her teeth and they were in very good order since she had undergone routine dental care only a month or two ago. Careful examination with a light still did not reveal any abnormality. Then Tias carefully palpated her tongue as

he has seen some cases previously where there were foreign bodies lodged in the tongue. Fortunately Tias was able to palpate something sharp just protruding from the muscle at the base of the tongue. Eventually a 7 cm long piece of wire was removed.



Chaylee holding the offending piece of wire

Horses are fairly discriminate eaters and in comparison with cattle for instance, and rarely get foreign bodies lodged in their gastrointestinal tract or mouth. Now with the risk of Hendra virus always upon us and in the light of current litigation against 3 Queensland vets it shows how simple problems can be very hard to manage if horses are not vaccinated fully for this disease. This is one case which was simply resolved where PPE could not have adequately protected the vet to allow a full and timely examination.

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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