

WARWICK EQUINE VETERINARIANS

185 BRACKER ROAD

WARWICK.

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Newsletter

Tias away from 20th June to 12th July

Limb lacerations

Swamp cancer or Pythiosis

Follow up on coffin joint fracture

Each month goes by quickly when you are having a good time. For us at WEV we have been fortunate indeed that the lock down restrictions have not had too big an impact on us and we have been able to continue to practice our passion: looking after our equine patients.

Now that Queensland is starting to open up it will make it easier for us to continue our work. Also, we have some leave scheduled which we will now be able to take. For the last 2 weeks of June and the first week of July Tias will be away from the practice. During this time our regular trips by Tias to the Gold Coast and districts will probably not go ahead. So book in early or schedule your routine work for after this time. If there are pressing issues we may consider sending one of our other vets during this time-this will depend on demand so contact the office if you think you need this.

Wounds on horses' legs are always a challenge. This month we will present two recent leg injuries illustrating one important aspect of assessing wounds. The first case was devastating. The mare, a lovely quiet riding mare, was found with her hind limb caught in a fence with the wires twisted around it. As you can see in the photo the extensor



tendons have been severed, there is bone exposed and there is a possibility that the wound extends into the hock joints. This last possibility is often very problematic and one of the first things we need to check for in horse leg wounds. In this

case, however, there was an even more overriding problem. After careful examination it became apparent there was no blood supply to the distal limb. Even though the wound is large and extensive, it is not unusual for horses with these type of injuries to be saveable, but in this case the plain wire had wrapped around the leg and pulled tight. It had not completely severed the important blood vessels but had occluded them for long enough that clots had formed within them and completely blocked all blood supply to the leg below the wound.

This is an important thing to check for because no amount of splinting and wound care was going to save this mare and we spared her a lot of suffering by humanely euthanising her.

This second case had a very different outcome. A young quarter horse stallion managed to get his forelimb wedged between 2 posts, but only for a short time. The owner managed to free the horse free by cutting off the posts with a grinder all in a matter of a few minutes. When we first examined him he was quite lame and there were modest wounds on both sides of the pastern. We knew though the pressure on the tissue had been extreme and we were worried about the tissues and blood vessels being crushed and therefore that the wound would look much worse before getting better. What can happen in these wounds is the tissue is crushed and local blood supply lost and this tissue dies off and falls away over days or weeks. This is exactly what happened in this case and the photos are from a few days later. We were very concerned that as tissue sloughed away ligaments or joints may be exposed and lost. These photos nicely demonstrate the gradual loss of tissue as well as the body trying to heal the



wounds. The important thing to remember with crushing type wounds or those which have had their blood supply compromised is that the wounds can look a lot worse over days and important structures can be initially ok and become involved as time goes on. This stallion was fortunate, the tissue loss stopped before the main ligaments and joints in the region were impacted severely.

Another case seen over the last weeks was a mare from central Queensland. She presented in foal and had rapidly developed a large lesion on one hind limb. When she first arrived there was some lameness, and she had a massive ulcerated and discharging mass over one hind fetlock. We confirmed she remained pregnant. She was, however, severely anaemic and was losing a lot of fluid from the rapidly growing wound.



The photo on the left is how it looked when cleaned up at first presentation. The tissue was constantly leaking fluid, very friable with small abscesses (kunkers) distributed within it. This is a condition rarely seen in

Southern Queensland and further south. Commonly known as "swamp cancer" it is actually a fungal infection associated with hot wet conditions. We confirmed this was a "Pythium" infection by submitting a sample of the tissue to a pathologist colleague who is internationally recognised (though now retired) for his work on tropical fungal infections. Tias worked with Richard some 30 or more years ago when a student and both were excited to catch up over a case. Treatment of these infections is problematic especially in a pregnant mare as most of the treatments used are harmful to the developing embryo. What we did to control the infection at this time is use a specific vaccine which causes the body to make antibodies to the fungal infection as well as cutting off as much of the infected tissue as possible and providing local wound care.

After a couple of surgical debridements we have completely stopped the growth of the lesion and now have relatively healthy granulation tissue. We hope she manages to keep progressing over the last few months of the pregnancy and when she has delivered her foal we can use other treatments on her to help get complete resolution. This has been a particularly difficult case with such a large rapidly growing lesion and the inability to use many of our standard treatments, however, the mare put on a lot of condition while in our care and with some pain relief managed to show us that she wants to go on.

Thanks again to all our clients for supporting us through these difficult times and we look forward to continuing to help you with your horses over the coming months.

The WEV team.



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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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Some months back we presented a case of a Percheron cross gelding which was lame due to an intra-articular fracture fragment within the coffin joint. He had been lame some months when we were first called in and diagnosed the problem and we performed arthroscopic surgery to remove the fragment. Recently we did his follow up examination and x-rays. The big fellow is progressing particularly well, and on a trot up in hand was not detectibly lame, a big turnaround for him. We will keep him on anti-arthritic medications, largely because the fragment had been within the joint and caused damage for some time before removal and long term arthritis within this joint is likely to be our biggest challenge. We are very happy with his progress though. The arrows in the before and most recent x-rays show where the fragment was and the new bone which was forming in the margins of the joint which has not progressed excessively since surgery.

