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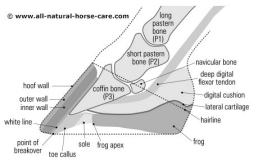
EQUINE BIOSECURITY



MANAGING THE LAMINITIC HORSE

CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUR HORSE & UMBILICAL CORD CARE

EQUINE SUMMER NEWSLETTER

EQUINE BIOSECURITY

Our recent experience with the human coronavirus has reminded us about the importance of preparedness and biosecurity for our equine patients. There are many common reasons to consider isolation or quarantine for horses, including recent purchase, new arrival at a stable, or return from various shows or travel. A reason that most of us consider less frequently is a disease outbreak.

Some of you may have past experience with strangles and recognize how quickly a disease can spread through a stable wing or even a whole farm. Horse owners do their best to keep equipment clean and feed sick horses after they finish caring for "healthy" horses to reduce spread, but sometimes the disease spreads anways. We don't want to downplay the adverse effects and health risks associated with strangles, but the long-term prognosis for this disease is good in most cases.

Not all diseases are associated with a relatively good prognosis. Consider a serious infectious disease, like the neurotropic strain of equine herpes virus type 1 (EHV-1). This virus is everywhere and nearly every horse is exposed to it by an early age, but outbreaks of the neurologic disease occasionally occur. Loss of coordination, inability to stand, and death are common outcomes, but survival and return to normal function are possible with early intervention and treatment. In the unfortunate event of an outbreak, regardless of the disease, strict biosecurity can stop the spread and save horses' lives.

If you think you recognize signs of infectious disease in your horse, including respiratory or neurologic signs, please contact us immediately so we can diagnose and treat them and help you develop an appropriate biosecurity protocol. If certain high-profile or dangerous diseases are diagnosed or suspected, state veterinary officials may assist in the process and possibly place your farm in official quarantine. This is important for controlling the spread of serious pathogens within the community and beyond.

Hopefully no one reading this ever needs to experience a quarantine situation. Nevertheless, a good understanding of biosecurity and having a plan in place ahead of time can help you reduce the impact of equine infectious disease on your farm. Here are a few things to think about and discuss with your veterinarian at our next visit so that you can be more prepared if an outbreak ever occurs on your farm:

- If you have a large farm and only 1 sick horse, we may ask you to move the sick horse to isolation. This might be a temporary stall set up in a different building, or an out-of-the-way paddock with a run-in shed away from other horses. Do you have a place in mind to do this?
- If you have a small farm (where all horses are likely already exposed to an infectious pathogen) or a large farm with multiple sick horses, we may ask you to leave the horse(s) in their normal stall and "quarantine in place" (sound familiar?).
- If you quarantine in place, the goal is to eliminate the possibility that bodily fluids from one horse reaches other horses. This includes saliva and respiratory secretions aerosolized by coughs. Your approach should include boarding-up any bars or gaps between stalls of adjacent horses, as well as taping plastic sheets over bars facing the barn aisle. Each sick horse should have dedicated pails and other equipment, and any shared equipment should be disinfected prior to using it on another horse. Temperatures should be taken on all horses twice daily to monitor disease spread.
- The list of supplies you will need includes thermometers, Tyvek suits, gloves, rubber boots, boot wash containers and brushes, a disinfectant such as chlorhexidine or Bleach, Lysol disinfectant wipes, Ziploc bags for medication, and clipboards for recording information for each horse.

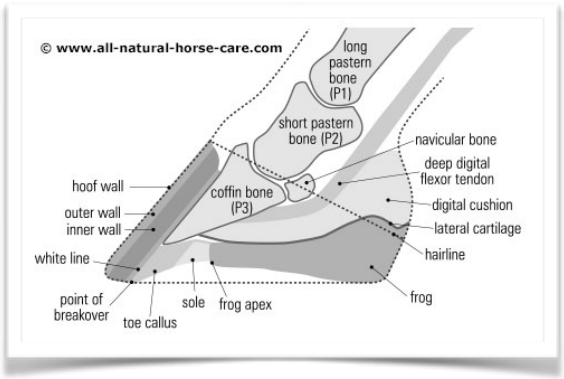
CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Whatever paddock, pasture, or pen your horse is exposed to, it is the owner's responsibility to make sure it is safe for horses. Before turning horses out onto new pasture, make sure to do a thorough walk-through to check for broken or loose fence posts, batteries, or other broken or protruding sharp objects. Regularly check stalls for protruding or loose nails that are likely to snag a horse's eyelid or create a puncture wound. Horses are flight-driven animals, and it is important to provide them with a safe living environment.

In most cases, a disease outbreak will be considered over when all sick horses have recovered and no new horses are getting sick. In the case of official quarantine by the state veterinarian, there is usually a period of days following the last sign of a sick animal that the quarantine must remain in place. In any case, the earlier you recognize a contagious disease and more prepared you are to react, the more likely you are to witness a positive outcome from a bad situation. It's better to call the vet and find out your horse has something mild than to wait and end up with a barn full of sick or dead horses. Keeping biosecurity in the back of your mind will make you more prepared in the event of an outbreak and hopefully lead to a better outcome for your horses.

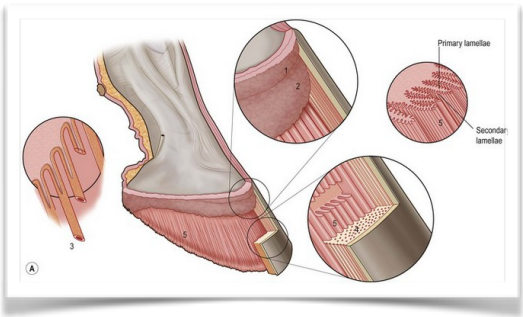
MANAGING THE LAMINITIC HORSE

With the presence of warmer weather and fresh pasture comes increasing concerns for the horse owner regarding laminitic and overeating issues. As many horse owners know, laminitis is defined as the inflammation of the layers of tissue (laminae) inside the hoof wall. The laminae are interdigitating structures that help keep the coffin bone (bone located within the hoof capsule) connected to the hoof wall. When blood flow to the laminae gets disrupted, the strength of the laminae decreases. The result is a decreased stability of the connection between the hoof wall and the coffin bone. In very severe cases, the hoof wall actually separates from the coffin bone, causing the bone to change position in the foot. If too much rotation occurs, the coffin bone will rotate downwards and exit the hoof through the sole. The term "founder" is used when a horse has been battling laminitis for a long time and has current displacement of the coffin bone.



Even though laminitis is viewed as a "foot problem," it is precipitated by another event. Laminitic episodes can be caused by excessive grain intake, sudden access to lush forage (turning out on new pasture), toxins, colic, infectious diseases causing metabolic upset, retained placentas, trauma, or injury to another leg (redistribution of weight to other limbs). Each horse has a different susceptibility to developing laminitis, as well as how severely his/her symptoms will be. Draft breeds and ponies, overweight horses, and animals with current metabolic disease (ie Cushings's) are more likely to experience a laminitic episode.

It is important for owners to be able to recognize early signs of laminitis and to call the veterinarian immediately so that treatment can be started as soon as possible. If a horse escapes from his stall at night and gets into the grain room, that is an emergency. Your vet will pass a nasogastric tube and remove ingested grain from the stomach and start your horse



on intravenous anti-inflammatories. Increased digital pulses, heat in the feet, lameness (a “rocking back” stance), and reluctance to move forward are all signs of acute laminitis. Chronic signs include irregular hoof growth, a “cresty" neck (excessive fat deposition), solar bruising, and increased white line space.

T**he sooner treatment is begun the better the outcome for your horse.** Managing laminitic horses usually requires long-term commitment by the owner. Your veterinarian can discuss dietary and nutritional changes, pasture management, stabling options, pain relief therapy, and corrective shoeing options with your farrier.

The long-term prognosis for horses with laminitis varies. Creating a management plan with your veterinarian will help keep horses as comfortable as possible while preventing the progression of the disease.

UMBILICAL CORD CARE

Failure to properly disinfect the umbilical cord immediately after birth can lead to absorption of bacteria into the blood of a foal. This can lead to acute septicemia and death, or in less severe cases can cause septic arthritis. For the best chance of avoiding permanent lameness in foals with septic arthritis, treatment by a veterinarian needs to be initiated less than 24 hours after onset of the first signs of swelling. Lameness doesn’t develop for a few days, so close observation of young foals is very important. Of course, a clean foaling environment and dipping navels with a dilute iodine solution twice daily for the first two days of life is the best approach to avoiding septicemia issues in foals. Don’t over-do the iodine dip, or the cord will become too dry and develop cracks that can allow bacteria in.

Thanks for sending in those Fecal Egg Counts!

If you have any questions about strategic deworming and how it can improve your horse’s health and environment please contact your veterinarian.

Share your email with us at waupunequine@gmail.com