

WINGHAM & VALLEY VETS

Newsletter

May 2017

Volume 2

Calf disbudding doesn't have to be a headache!

Most dairy calves are born with horn buds and the removal of these is termed 'disbudding'. Horn buds are not attached to underlying bone until around 8 weeks of age when they will fuse to the skull. Once they fuse, the technique is 'dehorning'.

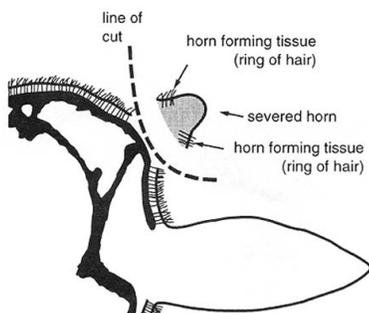


Figure 1: Diagram of the horn bud and disbudding (DPI website)

Disbudding removes the horn-forming tissue so horns are unable to grow (see Figure 1).

Why is disbudding preferable to dehorning?

When compared to dehorning older cattle, disbudding calves is less painful and is less likely to cause infection when performed correctly.

How is disbudding performed?

We recommend hot iron cautery in combination with local anaesthesia and pain relief. All calves should be disbudded between 2 and 8 weeks of age as it is a quicker procedure and much less painful than dehorning. One study found that calves disbudded with a combination of pain relief and local anaesthetic had a

Calves disbudded with adequate pain relief at 2-8 weeks of age will have improved welfare, improved recovery, better average daily gain and reduced risk of infection.

Disbudding and dehorning are painful. Studies show an acute pain response within 30 minutes, which can last for 8 hours. Therefore, performing these procedures without adequate pain relief is a welfare concern. It has also been demonstrated that feed intake and weight gain can be adversely affected for at least 30 days afterwards.

15-18% increase in growth rates (kg/day) compared to calves disbudded without adequate pain relief.



Cases of the Month

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Bracken Toxicity

Whipworms in Goats

Haemorrhagic Gastro (dogs)

Joint Infection (horses)

Environmental Mastitis

Grass seed problems (dogs, cow/horse eyes)

Nymphomaniac Cows

Foal Rotavirus

Run Dates

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Krambach: every Tuesday

Oxley Island: Thurs 25th May

Cooperbrook, Lansdowne & Taree: Thurs 18th May

To book a job, please call us by 5pm the day before the run.

Emergencies will be accommodated.

6557 0000

Upcoming Events

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We are hoping to conduct an on-farm lameness workshop for local farmers in the near future – 'like' our Facebook page to keep updated with what's going on!

Equine dental problems seriously impact horse health

Horse teeth erupt continuously throughout their life, producing sharp edges and enamel points that cause gum lacerations, ulcers and pain and difficulty eating. Initially, signs of dental disease may not be obvious – it is only once the dental disease becomes quite severe that symptoms such as weight loss and dropping of food from the mouth become apparent. Horses with chronic uncorrected dental disease will often lose teeth as they age, making it difficult for them to maintain bodyweight. Chronic dental problems can also contribute to choke and colic.



Equine dentistry is a cornerstone of horse healthcare – it is essential that you have your horse's teeth checked regularly by your equine veterinarian as many horses with severe dental disease may not show obvious symptoms

In general, a horse's teeth should be checked every year, however young horses, performance horses and those with 'problem' mouths should be checked more regularly (i.e. every 6 months). Three of our experienced veterinarians – John, Pete and Michael - have a special interest in equine dentistry and are fully qualified to undertake routine and corrective equine dentistry with our state-of-the-art 'powerfloat'.

How do you know your horse requires a dental exam?

If it has been more than 12 months since their last dental check or if they have any of these symptoms: weight loss, dropping feed, drooling, slow or abnormal chewing, head tossing, bit resistance, nasal discharge, bad breath or changes in manure (cow-pat appearance or hard faecal balls with long strands of undigested fibrous feed matter).

Why does my horse require sedation for a dental float?

This allows us to comfortably place a full mouth gag and examine the entire oral cavity, ensuring no pathology is missed.

We can perform equine dentals on-farm in our mobile crush or you can bring your horse to our equine facility to save on travel costs.



In the spotlight: Coughing Horses



Does your horse have a mild intermittent cough?

A small cough from your horse at the beginning of work may not seem like anything to worry about, however it could be a sign of inflammatory airway disease (IAD). Low grade inflammation of the lower respiratory tract can cause serious problems, often without major clinical signs.

Coughing is NOT normal when:

- It occurs consistently at the start of exercise
- It occurs spontaneously in the stable or during feeding
- It is deep or productive
- It reduces performance
- It is persistent, lasting more than a few weeks

Typical signs of IAD: chronic coughing (for longer than 1 month), absence of fever, reduced performance, increased breathing effort during exercise, watery or white nasal discharge.

Horses with IAD are typically eating well, bright and alert.

How is it diagnosed?

1. Ruling out infectious causes of coughing
2. Airway endoscopy
3. Bronchoalveolar lavage or tracheal wash to sample cells in airways

See over the page for advice on controlling IAD

Free Copper, Selenium and Cobalamin Testing for Manning Valley Cattle Producers



Figure 2: If your cattle look like this it may indicate a trace element deficiency

Selenium and Copper deficiency can be a significant problem in cattle grazing pasture on the Mid North Coast of NSW. Deficiencies in these two essential trace elements can impact on health, normal growth and especially fertility. Selenium is essential for preventing cell damage from harmful free radicals and for good immunity to disease. Clinical signs of selenium deficiency include: suboptimal milk production, poor fertility, retained foetal membranes, mastitis, premature/weak calves, perinatal death, abortions, ill thrift, poor growth rates, chronic diarrhoea and retention of winter coats. Severe deficiency can cause acute muscular dystrophy in young calves (resulting in collapse and death 2-3 days after birth) or subacute muscular dystrophy in calves 1-4 weeks old (causing stiff gait, weakness and recumbency).

Trace element deficiencies have severe impacts on herd health and fertility. We are currently offering free testing of Copper, Selenium and Vitamin B12 levels. Any herd with unexpectedly low conception rates should consider trace element testing.

We are currently looking for herds to test for Selenium, Copper and Vitamin B12 deficiencies in the Manning Valley. The testing involves taking blood samples from a random selection of cattle in the herd (minimum 10) – ideally from both old and young animals. The pathology on the blood samples will be at no cost to farmers – you will only be charged subsidised vet time for the sample collection and sample postage. We have already sampled two herds, both of which had significantly low levels in Selenium in almost all animals sampled. Both herds had experienced lower than expected fertility rates over several years, which could be attributable to Selenium deficiency. Since Selenium can be toxic in high doses, it is preferable to first confirm cattle are selenium deficient before administering Selenium supplements. If you would like to take advantage of the free testing, please contact us at the clinic on 6557 0000.

Controlling IAD in horses: the mainstays of treatment

1. Reducing environmental irritants:
 - Completely removing hay from the diet (used pelleted complete feeds or soaked hay cubes)
 - Reduce dust in stable – changing bedding to paper or wood shavings rather than straw or hay
 - Have horse on pasture regularly
 - Do not muck out stable while horse is in there
 - Well ventilated stable
2. Treat airway inflammation – corticosteroids (oral, injectable or inhaled)
3. Expand abnormally constricted airways – bronchodilators (oral or inhaled)

The prognosis for full recovery is good – most horses will respond well to decreased environmental exposure to irritants with the above management changes. Anti-inflammatory and bronchodilator therapy can speed recovery. IAD can recur seasonally in some horses.

Equine worming: be strategic!

We are commonly asked: how regularly should I worm my horse? Horse owners are often advised to worm their horses every 6-8 weeks, but at Wingham and Valley Vets we recommend a 'strategic drenching program', which combines drenching with pasture management and uses faecal egg counts (FEC) to monitor the level of parasitic infection in your horse. Strategic drenching programs reduce the frequency of drenching to only 4 times a year: early and late summer, winter and spring.

We are currently offering an Equest Plus Tape wormer combined with a faecal egg count for \$43. If you would like to implement a strategic drenching program for your horse, please contact us at the clinic.

- ❖ Collect manure from your horse every 8-12 weeks for FEC
- ❖ Implement a regular drenching program – e.g. Equest every 14- 16 weeks for 12 months and then consider changing to Strategy-T for 12 months
- ❖ Remove manure regularly
- ❖ Feed horses in feed bins ideally off the ground
- ❖ Keep stocking rates as low as possible
- ❖ Keep the youngest horses on the least contaminated pasture
- ❖ Drench all horses in a group at the same time, at the correct weight
- ❖ Mixed grazing with sheep or cattle or prolonged spelling of pasture can help to reduce contamination
- ❖ Drench all new horses before they enter the property, and wait 48 hours before introducing them to pasture

Don't forget, we are now offering Bull Testing

A sub-fertile herd bull has a major economic impact on your business. We recommend producers have their bulls tested prior to sale or purchase and/or prior to joining with the herd each year. **A herd bull with unknown fertility can affect herd reproductive performance and profitability well into the next decade.**

The five components of bull fertility in the Bull Breeding Soundness Exam (BBSE) are: scrotal examination, general physical exam and reproductive tract examination, semen analysis, morphology (if requested) and serving ability. Contact us on 6557 0000 for more information.



Equine & Cattle Services



Dairy Herd Health Programmes
ACV Accredited Pregnancy Testing
Bull Breeding Soundness Exams
Infertility Investigation
Lameness
Mastitis Management
Equine Dentistry
Pre-purchase exams

Over 100 years combined experience
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24 HOUR EMERGENCY SERVICE – 6557 0000