



ST DAVID'S EQUINE  
VETERINARY SURGEONS

# ST DAVID'S EQUINE PRACTICE

# NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 3. ISSUE 3

SEPTEMBER 2007

## FOR SALE

14.3hh 6yr old Irish cob gelding. Has been schooling and doing lateral work. Hacks alone or in company. He has three straight paces, a snaffle mouth, loads and travels well. Has completed clear round at Bicton Arena and X-country jumping 2'6" - 2'9" including water trays. Needs a fly rug in summer (incl. in sale). Passport, vaccinations, teeth and worming all up to date. This chap has a wonderful character and has lots of potential. Sale due to rider being too big. £3,800 ono. CALL 07704716326. E-mail hossy-chief@yahoo.co.uk for pictures and video

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## Gastric Ulcers Diagnosed

Gastric ulceration (stomach ulcers) is an important cause of poor performance and poor thrift in horses and ponies. The condition is well recognised in racehorses—affecting around 90% of racehorses in training. Gastric ulceration is also thought to affect around 60% of competition horses including eventers, showjumpers, dressage horses, endurance horses and hunters. Foals are also very susceptible to gastric ulceration along with horses and ponies recovering from surgery and those that are frequently transported.

The symptoms of gastric ulceration can be vague and may include one or two of the following:

- Poor or picky appetite
- Weight loss
- Rough hair coat
- Sour attitude
- Mild to moderate colic
- Poor performance
- Behaviour change

Some horses don't exhibit any of the above symptoms. It can be extremely frustrating for owner and vet alike when presented with a

horse or pony with vague symptoms and a history of poor performance.

The only way to definitively diagnose gastric ulcers is to perform a gastroscopy using a 3 metre endoscope. St David's Equine practice has recently purchased a video gastro-scope for use at the practice at Nutwell. The advantage of a video gastro-scope is that the image from the gastro-scope is displayed on a computer screen making it far easier for us to explain what we are seeing and giving the owner an opportunity to see the ulcer before treatment com-



mences. The images can also be saved and stored for future reference. Gastric ulcers are graded 1-5 according to severity. The ulcer in the picture above is a grade 5 ulcer.

For more information please phone 01392 876622

### NEVER MISS AN ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER!

Currently our equine newsletter only goes out to those clients who have had work done in the month preceding the newsletter issue. Obviously most clients don't have us out every month so if you enjoy reading this newsletter and would prefer to receive it in PDF format via e-mail, please send an e-mail to [alison@stdavids-vets.co.uk](mailto:alison@stdavids-vets.co.uk) putting **newsletter** as the subject.

## NEW APPEAL FOR STRANGLES RESEARCH

The second Strangles Awareness Week took place in May and we are hearing reports that strangles is around in the South Devon area again. It's probably always around all areas as it is the most commonly diagnosed infectious disease of horses in the UK and worldwide.

Strangles is a bacterial disease caused by *Streptococcus equi* and can be extremely distressing for both horse and owner. The clinical signs of strangles include high temperature, depression, profuse nasal discharge and swellings on the side of the head and throat. These swellings are abscessed lymph nodes which can in severe cases cause breathing difficulties hence the name strangles.

Most horses recover from strangles, sometimes very quickly, sometimes not so, but it does kill between 1 and 10% of affected animals. The infection can occasionally spread to other lymph nodes in the body causing the severe disease 'bastard strangles'.

### Diagnosis

We diagnose strangles by taking a swab either from the horse's throat, nasal discharge or from abscessed lymph nodes. The swabs are sent to a laboratory and cultured to see if there is any growth of the causal organism *Strep. equi*. A PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test is also available from the Animal Health Trust in Newmarket which increases the chances of identifying infected horses.

The Animal Health Trust is currently developing a blood test for strangles. This would be a huge step forward in the fight against strangles as it would enable us to identify not only acutely infected horses but also long-term carriers. This could possibly be used in the future to screen horses for example when they move to a new livery yard.

### Treatment

We are often asked why we don't treat strangles with antibiotics as it is caused by a bacterial infection. This would seem to be the obvious thing to do but the abscesses which are the main feature of strangles do not have a blood supply and so antibiotics cannot penetrate to the centre of the abscess. Some cases do warrant antibiotic treatment but each case needs to be assessed individually. Treatment of strangles usually involves nursing care and sometimes anti-inflammatory painkillers to bring the horse's temperature down, make him more comfortable and keep him eating.

### Vaccination

Intervet launched a live vaccine called 'Equilis Strep E' in 2004 which is given into the upper lip every 3 – 6 months depending on local risk. However, the vaccine has been off the market for about a year now and we don't know when it will be available again. The Animal Health Trust is currently developing a vaccine for intramuscular administration. The Trust needs more funds to continue developing the vaccine but the results are very promising so far.

### Spread of infection and prevention

Strict management practices are needed to prevent the spread of strangles. The bacteria survive in water for over a month and so frequent disinfection of water troughs and buckets that might be shared is required. Strangles can be passed from animal to animal by close contact and can also be transported between horses mechanically i.e. on clothes, tack, hands etc. Therefore, tack should not be shared between horses and handlers must change their clothes and thoroughly wash their hands before handling another horse.

The incubation period for strangles is 7 – 14 days but because infected horses can shed the bacterium for a long time, new cases in an outbreak can take over three weeks to become apparent.

### How to help

The Animal Health Trust and the British Horse Society have launched a campaign called 'Breaking the Strangles hold' to raise awareness and funds into the research currently being undertaken at the Animal Health Trust. They need to raise £250,000 to help continue the research into testing for and vaccinating against strangles. The aim is to eventually eliminate the disease from the UK.

Donations can be given by post, phone and online using the information below:

Post a cheque to: Strangles Appeal, Animal Health Trust, FREEPOST CB360, Lanwades Park, Kentford, Newmarket, Suffolk, CB8 7BR.

Phone 08700 502380

Visit [www.strangles.org](http://www.strangles.org) to donate online

## RAGWORT AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

The British Horse Society is urging people to take part in its second Ragwort Awareness Week of 2007 which runs from 17-24 September. There seems to be a vast amount of the deadly weed growing this year which must be removed from grazing areas to prevent ragwort poisoning in horses and cattle. The Society is inviting volunteers to hold Ragwort Pulling Parties and has information and free 'Ragforks' available for those interested in taking part. Ragwort is a common weed which thrives on verges and wasteland from where it can spread to grazing land. Ragwort is toxic to humans too so always wear gloves when handling it, a facemask is also recommended. If you are a landowner, you have a legal obligation to control the ragwort on your land if it poses a medium or high risk to grazing animals or land used for forage production. To find out more about ragwort, the law, ragwort awareness week or 'Ragforks', visit the British Horse Society website at [www.bhs.org.uk](http://www.bhs.org.uk).

# Focus on Equine Nursing

We have a new member of staff here at St David's Equine. Sarah Woolloff has joined the team as a trainee equine veterinary nurse. Sarah joins Janie MacDonald who is our other trainee nurse. Both girls are supported by Claire Hawkins our qualified veterinary nurse and head receptionist.

Sarah grew up in Dorset and spent a year at Kingston Maurdard Agricultural College when she was 17. She then went to Bovington R.A.C. Saddle Club at Bovington Army Camp in Dorset to train. She became head girl, took her teaching exams and went on to become their senior instructor. After 9 years at Bovington, Sarah spent 6 months at Wychanger Barton Saddlery



then went to the Margaret Green Foundation which is a rescue charity. After that Sarah joined Nutwell Saddlery and joins the equine team from there. She lives in Exeter and has a horse called Mags and a dog called Grace.

Janie and Sarah have many roles at the practice. The girls run the inpatient ward looking after the daily requirements of our inpatients. They handle any horses that come into the practice for treatment and assist the vets. In the surgical theatre they assist with anaesthesia and surgery and are in charge of the surgical supplies. The nurses also help in the dispensary with the distribution of drugs and supplies to equine clients and the equine vets.

Janie and Sarah also run our in house laboratory and are responsible for processing the blood samples which come into the practice. At the practice we can run both haematology (red blood cell and white blood cell counts) and biochemistry (liver enzymes etc). We use haematology to diagnose anaemia and it also can help to tell us if a horse is suffering from a virus or a bacterial infection. Biochemistry can tell us about the health of the liver, kidneys, muscle etc. As well as

being a useful diagnostic tool in the case of the acutely sick horse, taking blood samples can help us to monitor



the health of horses who are on long term medication (e.g. 'bute' or phenylbutazone) and horses who are lethargic or have poor performance. Our biochemistry machine is particularly sophisticated and we can run a great number of different enzyme assays. As the lab is in house we can usually get blood sample results the same day as the blood is taken and within a few hours in an emergency.

Both Janie and Sarah will start their three years equine veterinary nursing training part time this coming September.



# NUTWELL COURT NEWS

## JUMPING CLINICS AT NUTWELL COURT

From April 2007 we are pleased to inform you that Professional Event Rider Christelle Durrant will be joining us here at Nutwell Court, to be part of the expanding Equine Centre.

Christelle started riding at the age of 2 and after successive years working in private hunting and competition yards went on to run her own event yard at Powderham for the last 5 years. During that time she has had impressive results, culminating in a 7<sup>th</sup> place at Gatcombe British Intermediate Championships last year on her ride 'Classic Diamond Charm,' and coming to the attention of the European 2\* team selectors. This horse was purchased by Christelle for an owner, at the age of four and then solely produced by her to become advanced grade aged just seven.

Christelle will not only be bringing her team of event horses but also her valuable training skills. She will be able to offer training clinics to all levels – young, old, novice or the more experienced rider and is happy to do groups or one to one sessions. Christelle will have a strong input into the design and layout of the cross country course and we look forward to some exciting changes.

Eventing is her passion and she is very keen to impart her knowledge and enthusiasm to others, in all aspects, whether it's Show Jumping, Cross Country or just general feeding and fitting advice.

Please give her a call for details of training options and availability - 07834 466 547.

Or look up her results for yourself

[www.britisheventing.co.uk](http://www.britisheventing.co.uk) and search 'durrant'



## NUTWELL COURT CROSS COUNTRY COURSE

Nutwell Court is set in 150 acres of rolling parkland, which reach down to the banks of the river Exe. It is situated only 5 miles from the M5, Junction 30 and directly off the A376 Exmouth road, we offer easy access and parking, in beautiful surroundings. The Cross Country comprises of two courses, the riding club course and the longer Pre novice course, which run over established parkland. The fences have been built by professional course builder Mike McNulty and Simon Bere and include a range of permanent and portable fences. All of which are solid and well built. We offer a good variety of fences from 2ft 6ins - 3ft 3ins, these include such fences as: Steps, Rail-Ditch-Rail, Water Complex, Pheasant Feeders, Fruit Trays, Triple Bars, etc. The course is available for schooling ( depending on weather and ground conditions ) £10 per horse Special rates for groups. Professional Event rider Christelle Durrant is able to offer group or one to one schooling sessions. You can contact Christelle direct on 07834 466547.



## PROGRAMME OF EVENTS 2007

2<sup>nd</sup> September ~ One Day Event Exe Equestrian Club

Contact Mrs S. Hawkins 01395 265752

23<sup>rd</sup> September ~ Hunter Trial Exe Equestrian Club

Contact Mrs S. Hawkins 01395 265752