

ST DAVID'S EQUINE

VETERINARY SURGEONS

# NEWSLETTER

KEEPING IN TOUCH  
SUMMER 2014

## TALK ABOUT LAMINITIS

THE NATIONAL 'TALK ABOUT LAMINITIS'  
INITIATIVE IS BACK FOR A THIRD YEAR

Although grass can trigger laminitis, up to 90% of cases are caused by an underlying hormonal condition, either Cushing's disease (PPID) or Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS).



"TALK ABOUT LAMINITIS" is a scheme run by Boehringer Ingelheim, the drug company that manufactures "Prascend", the medicine licenced for the treatment of Cushing's Disease in horses and ponies. The initiative aims to raise awareness of the underlying hormonal causes of laminitis. Under the scheme, animals suspected of having Cushing's Disease can be blood sampled and the relevant laboratory test run free of charge to the client (the cost is borne by the company). This scheme allows owners a low cost way to check if their horse or pony is suffering from

Cushing's Disease or not. It also has the added benefit that laboratory data from many horses can be analysed to give us more information about the incidence and effects of Cushing's Disease. The scheme has been running since April and will run through the autumn (actually autumn is the time of year when the blood test for this disease is most sensitive).

Analysis of Cushing's blood test results from over 15,000 UK horses and ponies over the last 3 years under this scheme has identified that Cushing's is not just a disease of veteran animals, but could be responsible for laminitis in any horse or pony over the age of 10. In fact, more than a third of the 10-15 year olds within this group were positive for Cushing's. They were tested because they were showing signs of the disease such as laminitis, abnormal hair coat, muscle wastage, fat deposits round the eyes, lethargy, excessive sweating or excessive drinking. Horses or ponies with any of these clinical signs should be tested for Cushing's so that the condition can be treated and managed appropriately.

To participate in the free testing scheme or for further information contact our equine office or visit [www.talkaboutlaminitis.co.uk](http://www.talkaboutlaminitis.co.uk) to download your free blood test voucher.



Early diagnosis and intervention are critical to help reduce the risk of recurrent episodes of laminitis.

The "TALK ABOUT LAMINITIS" initiative is supported by Redwings, The British Horse Society and World Horse Welfare.

## NO MOLES HERE!!

You may have heard the recent announcement of a merger between St David's Farm Practice and the veterinary arm of Mole Valley Farmers to form a new company called Molecare Veterinary Services Ltd. The new company will provide predominantly farm animal veterinary services across the South West. The merger involves St David's Farm Practice only, St David's Equine Practice is not involved in any way.



Current Molecare sites are at South Molton, Frome and Bovey Tracey (small animal practice). St David's Equine Practice is a completely separate limited company from St David's Farm Practice and has been for several years. We have no business association with Mole Valley Farmers or Molecare Veterinary Services and will continue to act as a stand alone, equine only, veterinary practice. Our veterinary, nursing and support staff will remain unchanged.

We look forward to continuing to look after our equine patients in this area as before.



## CLIENT TESTIMONIAL: LIFE AFTER GASTRIC ULCERS

We recently received this email from one of our clients, Rachael Edmonds, and her horse "Fiddler". Fiddler was diagnosed with grade 2 and 3 gastric ulcers in January 2014 and was treated with Gastroguard. He was re-endoscoped after 4 weeks treatment and there had been a dramatic improvement in the appearance of his stomach lining. Fiddler has subsequently been maintained on our new Gastric Supplement, and according to Rachael is going on very well, even qualifying for HOYS!! We think everyone can agree that he looks wonderful in this picture of his proud moment!!

*Hi Claire*

*Thought I would share my good news with you and pop over a picture.*

*There is life after ulcers and they can be managed!!*

*I took Fiddler to Search for A Star at Summerhouse equestrian centre a couple of week ago and in a strong class of 28 hunters we came second and have qualified for HOYS!!*

*Just wanted to say thank you again for everyone's help at St David's, I thought you might like an update.*

*Kind Regards*

*Rachael*

# NEW RANGE OF EQUINE SUPPLEMENTS AT ST DAVID'S

We have recently started stocking a new range of equine supplements manufactured specifically for veterinary practices by "Hestevard". Their supplements are veterinary formulated to provide the best scientifically based products possible at the best possible price. Because these are sold to us directly, rather than through a veterinary wholesaler, they are very competitively priced. The range includes products for mobility and joint support, gastric ulceration and digestive health and hoof health and growth. Eventually we will provide details of these supplements on our website, but until that happens further information can be obtained by contacting the equine office.

Two of the St David's Supplements, aimed at treating gastric ulceration and supporting digestive function are detailed below.

## ST DAVID'S GASTRIC SUPPORT

### OFFERS AVAILABLE:

This supplement is available in trial size pots which are free of charge. This allows the customer to try the product before purchase to test its efficacy in their horse first hand and to ensure that their horse will eat it.

### WHEN CAN IT BE USED?

The recommended medicines to treat diagnosed gastric ulcers in horses are those containing the drug Omeprazole (Gastroguard, Ulcer Gold or Peptazole). Unfortunately these drugs are quite expensive. Gastric Support supplement is not meant as an alternative to these drugs but can be used as an aid to the management of gastric ulcers in a number of ways:

- Use alongside Omeprazole in the initial treatment of diagnosed ulcers.
- Long term use to help prevent recurrence of ulcers that have been previously successfully treated with omeprazole.
- Possible use as a cheaper treatment option where cost considerations preclude the use of Omeprazole.

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

In a study conducted by the company the supplement was shown to significantly reduce gastric ulceration score in horses after 6 weeks supplementation.

The following active ingredients are present in the supplement:

- Calcium Alginate (from Seaweed) and Kaolin. These give it a thick, clinging consistency which tends to coat the stomach wall and form a physical protective layer.
- Antacids such as calcium carbonate and magnesium hydroxide.
- Fructo-oligosaccharides. These are prebiotics and are recognised to



stimulate the growth of "desirable" bacteria within the hindgut as the bacteria use it as a food source. The FOS are not digested in the first part of the gut and so remain intact to be used by bacterial populations in the hindgut. This promotes healthy populations of bacteria in the hindgut.

- Glutamine is used in the production of proteins, as a fuel reserve for dividing cells and is important in the development of intestinal lining (epithelial) cells. Glutamine supplementation has been proven to increase intestinal performance and reduce intestinal damage.

Alginate, magnesium hydroxide and calcium carbonate are the main constituents in Gaviscon which is "prescribed" by doctors as an aid to managing gastritis in humans.

## ST DAVID'S DIGESTIVE SUPPORT

### WHEN CAN IT BE USED?

This supplement provides vitamins and other nutrients to support digestion and gastric health. It is more aimed at promoting hindgut health than treating gastric ulceration. It may be used in horses with diarrhoea or other digestive disorders, during and after antibiotic treatment, and following worming or at times of stress.

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

The following active ingredients are present in the supplement:

- Fructo-oligosaccharides = prebiotics. Their action is described above.
- Hindgut fermentation stabiliser. The yeast, *Saccharomyces Cerevisiae*, has been proven to promote conditions that favour the growth of "healthy" fibre fermenting bacteria in the hind gut over and above the rapid starch fermenters.
- Threonine. An essential amino acid. Restriction of threonine has been shown to reduce the ability of the gut to maintain an effective barrier.
- Vitamins and minerals.

Please contact our equine office if you would like more details on these or any of our other supplements or if you would like to try a free trial pot of St David's Gastric Support supplement for your horse.



# CASTRATION IN HORSES

## METHODS AND POTENTIAL COMPLICATIONS

As autumn approaches, clients with male foals may face choices about whether to castrate them. This article describes the choice of methods available to you and aims to give you more information to make the right choice for your foal or yearling.

Castration is defined as removal of the testicles and their associated structures.

The testicles are contained in two layers of the thin tissue that lines the abdominal cavity called the "vaginal tunic". The testicles, their vaginal tunic covering and an attached muscle (called the cremaster muscle) lie inside the skin pouch of the scrotum.

Castration can be carried out by two main methods, **OPEN CASTRATION** or **CLOSED CASTRATION**.

**OPEN CASTRATION** is usually considered to be a clean rather than a sterile procedure because it is carried out in non sterile conditions such as the stable or a field. The surgeon incises through the skin, subcutaneous tissue and the two layers of vaginal tunic to access the testicle. Because the vaginal tunic is continuous with the tissue lining the abdomen, this effectively opens a communication between the abdomen and the outside world, which increases risk of infection getting into the abdomen (peritonitis) or abdominal contents protruding from the surgical wound. The testicle is freed from its attachments to the scrotum and the spermatic cord (which contains the blood vessels and nerves supplying the testicle) is simultaneously cut and crushed by an instrument called an emasculator. Normally the crushing action of the emasculator is relied upon to prevent bleeding after the castration from the spermatic artery and vein, rather than a stitch being



applied. The wound is left open to drain and heal over time rather than being sutured.

We normally advise complete turnout after an open castration to encourage drainage from the wound and help to minimise the risk of infection. We normally advise against stabling as fragments of bedding can get into the open wound and predispose to infection. Even the cleanest stable is usually less hygienic than the conditions in a field.

**OPEN CASTRATION** has several potential complications which include: Uncontrolled bleeding from the spermatic vessels, infection (which gains entry through the open wound) and rarely, but most seriously, tissue or even gut from the abdomen protruding through the wound to the outside or infection gaining entry to the abdomen (peritonitis).

Certain environmental conditions can make complications after open castration much more likely, and because of this we may ask to delay

your horse's open castration if the conditions are not ideal. Conditions we try to avoid are: Wet or muddy conditions (which increase the likelihood of infection after surgery), times of the year when flies are more active (as they are attracted to feeding off tissue fluids from an open wound and can cause either infection or maggot infestation) and below freezing temperatures (which can cause frostbite on the unhealed edges of the wound).

**CLOSED CASTRATION** is a sterile surgical procedure. Although no surgical procedure is risk free, closed castration dramatically reduces the risks that are associated with open castration and so clinically it is much preferred. The surgeon incises the skin, but not the vaginal tunic covering the testicle (so the risk of infection entering the abdomen, or abdominal contents escaping are much reduced) and the blood vessels supplying the testicle are ligated or stitched (so the risk of bleeding from these is much reduced). The skin incision in the scrotum is usually sutured (so the risk of post operative infection is much reduced and healing is accelerated compared to open castration). Closed castration is normally carried out under general anaesthetic.

Many of the complications of open castration noted above are increased in likelihood and severity in older horses, mainly because the testicles in older horses are larger and have a greatly increased blood supply. This means that there is more risk of bleeding and there is a larger wound left behind which takes longer to heal and has more risk of becoming infected. Because of this we feel that in older horses, carrying out an open castration represents a significant risk to the horse. For this reason we recommend that horses over 2 years of age are castrated by the closed method.

## FREE!! ST DAVID'S STABLE MANAGEMENT APP

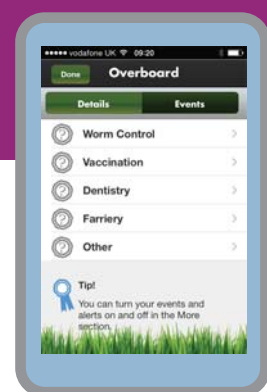
We are very pleased to launch a stable management app for mobile phones that will be free to our clients. This is currently only available for Apple iPhone, but should become available for Android users within the next few weeks. The App has been developed by Zoetis and expands and builds on their popular "Stablemate" App

The app allows owners to manage health and management information for up to 10 horses in each "stable". Reminders for important health and management events such as vaccination or farriery are automatically generated and sent to the owner as push notifications on their phone. The app also gives important health and emergency information and advice and this

section will be expanded and updated over time by our vets.

**To download the app, go to the Apple App Store and search for "Horse Dialog" in the iPhone app section (the app can be used on iPad too). When asked to input your user code, the code specific to our practice is "2cea".**

When the app is first downloaded, it will ask 'Do you give permission for Horse Dialog to access your diary?' We would suggest answering NO to this otherwise all of your general diary entries will show in the Horse Dialog app calendar, rather than just your horse management information.



A user guide for the app is available on our website.

Please give us feedback on your experiences with this app and if you like it please tell your friends so as many people can benefit from it as possible.

# ONE GOODBYE, ONE HELLO AND ONE WELCOME BACK TO AN OLD FRIEND

**We have had three changes in our veterinary staff over the last few months.**

In March 2014 Ben Crisp, who had worked for the practice for a number of years, decided that he was no longer enjoying equine practice and needed a new challenge. He feels that he will find this as a poultry vet and so decided to move to St David's Poultry Team. We wish him good luck in his new career and hope that his new role will give him the challenge, enjoyment and job satisfaction that he is looking for.

After Ben gave us notice of his intention to leave the practice Eleanor was quickly the stand out candidate from our interview process and we feel lucky that she accepted our job offer and wanted to come to work with us. Eleanor is an experienced equine vet and has worked in Dorset for a number of years. She started with the practice in mid July and her enthusiasm and relaxed friendly manner have already made her a very appreciated member of the team. Eleanor lives in Yettington with her partner and a large collection of animals!!

Most of you will know Alison Reed (nee Butcher). Alison was a very well liked vet while with us for a number of years but left the practice to start her family. She is now back and working for us on a part time basis again. It is lovely to welcome her back.

## ST DAVID'S WELCOMES NEW VET "ELLIE" TO OUR EQUINE TEAM



We are thrilled to welcome Eleanor (Ellie) to our veterinary team. She started with us in July and has already made a great impression with the clients she has visited. Ellie was already an experienced equine vet before starting with the practice. She graduated in 2010 from Edinburgh (the same University as Alison attended!) and has worked in equine veterinary

positions in Manchester and Dorset. She has now decided to settle in the South West.

Ellie grew up around horses in Surrey working as a groom for an international event rider and also as a nurse at the Liphook Equine Hospital in Hampshire before training to become a vet. Her particular work related interests include equine anaesthesia, dentistry and wound management as well as all aspects of first opinion equine practice. In her spare time Ellie enjoys wildlife photography, skiing and working her gundog, Teal. She also keeps Gloucester Old Spot pigs and a few chickens!

## ALISON REED RETURNS TO WORK AT THE PRACTICE



We are really glad to welcome Alison Reed back to our veterinary team. Many of you are sure to remember her from her previous stint working at the practice.

Ali qualified from Edinburgh University in 2003 and joined St David's Equine in September of that year. She met her husband to be, Darren, through her job and towards the end of 2007 left the practice to start a family. She now has 2 boys: Leo, who's 6, and Sebastian, who's 3. In between having her two boys, Ali did a 7 month locum job at North Park Veterinary Group covering the sick leave of their senior equine vet. Since 2012 Ali has worked at St David's as and when we have needed extra help and this March she returned on a more permanent part-time basis. We love having her back!

Ali lives near Winkleigh with Darren and their two boys on their beef and sheep farm. They also have a holiday let at the farm so she has plenty to keep her busy! If she does have any spare time she fills it with cycling and managed to complete a ride for charity in 2012 from Lands End to John O'Groats in 7 and a half days.

A warm welcome back to Ali!!

# COME FOR A TOUR

AROUND ST DAVIDS EQUINE  
PRACTICE WITH ONE OF  
OUR EQUINE NURSES



We have been in our new building for a few years now but still feel privileged to work in such lovely surroundings with such good clinical facilities and high end diagnostic equipment. Specialists such as Ollie Crowe (specialist orthopaedic surgeon), Jim Carter (specialist veterinary ophthalmologist) and Geoff Lane (specialist equine upper respiratory tract surgeon) regularly visit to examine and treat cases and remind us that our clinic facilities are equal to those of much larger referral centres in the UK. We feel that the facilities play a large part in helping us to provide a full range of high quality care to our clients horses.

Many clients are surprised at the quality of our facilities when they bring their horse to the practice for the first time and others say how much they would like to look around the clinic. This has given Janie, our head nurse, the idea of offering our clients the opportunity to look around the clinic in small groups, see the equipment and facilities that we have to offer and discuss these with a key member of our in-patient clinical team.

If you have always wanted to see inside an equine veterinary clinic, see how we anaesthetise horses, look around our operating theatre or bone scanning unit, see the "hotel accommodation" we offer to our equine clients or would just like to discuss our work in more detail this would be an ideal opportunity.

Janie and Arianne will be conducting practice tours for small groups of up to 4 or 5 people at a time by prior arrangement.

Please ring Janie to book a time if you are interested and please feel free to bring your equine owning friends too!!

ST DAVID'S EQUINE PRACTICE LTD

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