



U of M Horse Newsletter

Providing research-based information to Minnesota Horse Owners

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Volume 2, Issue 2

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Know Your Horse

By: Erin Malone, DVM, U of M

This article is designed to help you establish normal parameters for your horse and enable you to detect a potential problem as early as possible. You must know what is normal before you can determine what is abnormal. The following is a list of things you should check on a daily basis:

Posture. This may be the first clue that something serious is wrong. An example would be a horse that stretches out. This may be a normal routine for a horse or could be a sign of abdominal discomfort (colic). A horse that shifts its weight from one leg to the other constantly usually has pain in one of its legs, a horse that is reluctant to move may have founder, and a horse that completely refuses to bear weight on a limb could have a severe stone bruise, a foot abscess, a joint infection, or a fracture. **Appetite.** Watch your horse as you approach at feeding time. A good appetite is one of the best indicators of overall health. If your horse eats lightly at

one meal, do not panic. Check to see if someone else is feeding the horse or overfeeding him/her at other meals. Also, make a mental note of what food is left behind. A horse that dives into its grain at first and then stops eating after a few bites may have stomach ulcers. **Water.** Start by examining the horse's water pail or trough. Horses tend to drink an hour or so after they begin eating the roughage portion of their rations. A few hay stems or grains in the water are no cause for concern. However, if the water pail is packed with hay and or grain, your horse may be having trouble eating and using the water to soften the feed. This could be due to dental problems. **Manure.** A normal horse will pass 8-10 piles of manure per day. The manure pile should have well formed fecal balls with enough moisture so that the pile stays heaped. When the fecal balls become separate and somewhat dry, it may indicate that a horse is not drinking enough water. Firm fecal balls covered in mucous

are an indication that the horse is taking longer than normal to pass feces and may be due to dehydration. Loose manure could be due to a sudden change in feed, nervousness, or mechanical / bacterial irritation to the horse's gut. Some mares have loose manure when they are in heat. Diarrhea is not common in horses and can be a sign of a severe problem. It is best to call you veterinarian when you notice your horse has diarrhea, especially if it is accompanied by a fever. Extremely dry feces or lack of feces are also indications to call your veterinarian. If you have performed your daily exam and found that something is abnormal, then the next step is to take your horse's vital signs. Vital signs will be discussed in next month's (March) newsletter. For more information on daily posture, appetite, water and manure, please visit the website at www.extension.umn.edu/horse.

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Up Coming Events

Visit the website for additional information

February 18th, 2006
Horse Owner Education Day
Winona, MN
9:30 am -3:00 pm
Contact Kristi at
763-767-3837

February 25th, 2006
Horse Owner Education Day
Cambridge, MN
9:30 am -3:00 pm
Contact Kristi at
763-767-3837

March 4, 2006
Hands-on Horse Day at the
U of M in St. Paul.
Online registration available at
www.cvm.umn.edu/outreach

March 11th, 2006
Horse Owner Education Day
Norwood, MN
9:30 am - 3:00 pm
Contact Laura at
952-466-5300

March 18th, 2006
Horse Owner Education Day
Fergus Falls, MN
9:30 am - 3:00 pm
Contact Kristi at
763-767-3837

Ask the Expert

By: Krishona Martinson, U of M

Q: Are the topics the same at each Horse Owner Education Day?

A: Each program offers topics and speakers identified specifically for that region by a committee of local horse experts and enthusiasts. However, similar topics may be presented (i.e. First Aid) at each program. You can attend any program you like, based either on location or topics presented. Pre-registration is required for all programs. For more information on these programs, visit www.extension.umn.edu/horse or contact Kristi at 763-767-3837 (toll free 888-241-0719) or marti987@umn.edu.



Many racehorses and some other performance horses can develop a condition that critically decreases airflow during exercise. This condition is known as laryngeal hemiplegia and the horses are known as “roarers” because of the sound they make. Laryngeal hemiplegia is a condition caused by damage or degeneration of the laryngeal nerve. The term laryngeal hemiplegia literally means paralysis of half of the larynx. The larynx is composed of structures that guard the airway: the larynx closes to prevent food

Roarers

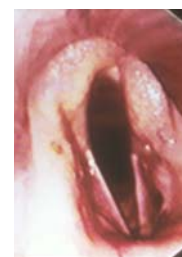
By: Erin Malone, DVM, U of M

entering the airway and opens to allow maximum airflow. With paralysis, the amount of oxygen horses can inhale during exercise is decreased. Affected horses are also usually exercise intolerant. Laryngoplasty is a procedure utilized to restore the upper airway to a more normal size in a horse with laryngeal hemiplegia. It is also known as a “tieback” procedure as the paralyzed portion of the larynx is

“tied back” out of the airway. An additional procedure often performed is ventriculectomy, removing small sacs in the larynx that can also cause noise. The horse often stays in the hospital for 48 hours receiving antibiotics and pain relievers. Following this, the horse will be confined to a stall with walking for 8 weeks. Approximately 70% of race horses have improved performance after surgery, dressage horse may



Normal larynx at rest.



Paralyzed Larynx - only right side opens.

experience performance improvements over 70%.

Preparing Your Mare for Breeding Season

By: Scott Madill, DVM, U of M

Not having your mare in optimal condition to conceive when you are ready to breed her results in lower fertility, frustration, and financial losses that can extend through this season and into the next. The critical things to check for are: is she having regular heat cycles, does she have a uterine infection, and is she in good body condition?

Her maintenance healthcare including vaccinations, deworming and preventative dental work should also be reviewed and updated several weeks before going to stud.

To ensure she is having regular cycles and ovulating the mare needs to be exposed to increasing day length starting 2 to 2.5 months before you want to breed her. For example, for mare owners wanting to

breed in February, the supplemental lighting program should have been started right after Thanksgiving or early in December. Even if you want a March or April foal, it is a good idea to start mares under lights as early as January, as it isn't unusual for mares that have not received light treatments to not cycle naturally until the early part of May.

The old standby of 16 hours of continuous light a day is easy and highly effective. The supplemental light is added in the evening, and in winter, this generally means the lights need to be on until 11 pm.

The rule of thumb for supplemental light intensity is being able to read a newspaper comfortably

anywhere in the stall, which translates to a 200-watt incandescent bulb or two 40-watt fluorescent tubes. Pregnant mares that are due to foal early in the season should also be put under lights as it isn't unusual for them to stop cycling for a while after their foal heat.

Many stud farms require a uterine culture (pre-breeding swab) on open mares before they will accept them for breeding to rule out infection. This can also benefit the mare owner as an undiagnosed infection can waste several heat cycles. Even the occasional maiden mare will be infected if she is a windsucker, and a complete veterinary examination of the reproductive tract can check not just for

infection, but also for injuries and anatomic defects that affect fertility and cycling. For barren mares a full investigation was likely performed at the end of last season and now is a good time to recheck her.

From a nutrition standpoint, the critical aspect is her body condition. Mares in moderate to good condition are more likely to cycle and conceive than those that are too thin or grossly overweight. Ideally, at the time she is bred, the mare has been in moderate condition and is adding just a little weight.

While many other things will affect your final result, paying attention to these aspects optimizes your mare's chance of conceiving.