

Talking Horses

The newsletter with news, views and practical advice

From the editor...

Welcome to our special Equitana 2011 issue. We look forward to meeting those of you who visit Equitana 2011 in Sydney. We receive a lot of emails back from readers and it is nice to have an opportunity to meet some of you if you attend Equitana. We have Stand # 235 in the Riverina pavilion.

Please come to meet Danielle, Lesley and Laurie on Thursday and Friday this week and myself, Kaye, and Jodie on Saturday, as well as Richard on Sunday if you have an opportunity. As usual, we will have the latest newsletters and lots of information with Fact Sheets and articles. We will answer any questions which you may have regarding the health or nutrition of your horse.

In this issue, we break from tradition by providing you with some of the Number 1 Handy Hints from past issues, in particular, the handy hints for summer conditions. Talking Horses is just 7 years old with 26 issues published over this period. The #1 Handy Hints are selected as being interesting and practical in nature. Many horse owners subscribe to receive the newsletters by email. If you would also like to receive newsletters by email, simply send an email to Gary at newsletters@kohnkesown.com and add your name to the email list to receive each issue in colour on the day it is published at 6-8 week intervals. Many subscribers print off and file each issue as a handy reference on health care and common problems of their horses. For those of you who may be recent subscribers, all 26 past issues are available for download from our website: www.kohnkesown.com under newsletters.

We take this opportunity to wish you all the Compliments of the Season and a safe and relaxing holiday period into the New Year. We wish you a great 2012 and continued enjoyment from your wonderful companions, your horses.

Kind regards,

Dr John Kohnke BVSc. RDA

Did you know that...

Horses cause less damage to pasture in a square paddock compared to a rectangular shaped paddock. This is because they do not walk the fences as much in a square paddock.

However, horses (particularly larger horses) are more likely to lie down and rest in a rectangular sized stable sized 3.4m (12ft) by 4.5m (15ft) than in a standard 12ft x 12ft stable.

Bandaging the Legs

It is a good idea if you are jumping your horse or doing any sort of high intensity training to wrap the lower legs between the knees and fetlocks, and hocks and fetlocks, with a soft padded protective bandage. This will minimise bruising to the lower limbs if he hits a rail or brushes his legs when turning sharply at the end of a jumping round. Choose a soft 'polo' type bandage and carefully look after it by washing it if it gets mud on it and dry it thoroughly before rolling it up for the next time you wrap your horse's legs. When wrapping the bandage on the lower legs, make sure that you wrap in a direction which pulls the tendons on the back of each limb to the inside. This means to wrap the near side leg in an anti-clockwise direction from the side to the back of the leg and around on the inside of the leg. On the off side legs, wrap in a clockwise direction, or from the front to the back on the outside of the leg and then around the back to the inside. If you wrap the opposite way, you may pull the tendons out of alignment on the back of the legs and increase the risk of over-loading the tendon when jumping. If you are left handed, take care to wrap the tendon in the correct direction.

After you have worked your horse, quickly remove any bandages or boots to allow the tendons to cool. This is important to allow the heat produced in the tendons as they stretch to escape from the tendon and reduce the risk of damaging the tendon structure. Hosing the lower limbs down with cold water after working your horse in the bandages will also help to cool the limbs.



Handy Hint 5

In this issue...

Special Issue for Equitana!

Handy hints and tips on some of the most common problems for horse owners.

Handy Hint 1

Masking Bad Flavours

Does your horse 'sift' or 'spit out' bitter or strong smelling worming or 'bute' granules? Here's a simple way to help him gobble them up! Simply freeze the granules or powder. Mix up a small amount of his favourite food, eg sweet bran mash, offer a taste to get his interest and then mix the frozen granules into the feed. Gobble, munch, gobble - they're gone! Horses can't smell or taste very cold granules. Works on dogs too!

Pasture Rotation

Rotational grazing by shifting horses in a rotation around a number of small paddocks can increase pasture productivity by up to 50% as compared to set, continuous grazing of larger paddocks. Horses best utilise pastures from 5cm to 15cm in height during the active growing phase of grass. Short pastures below 5cms are more easily grazed off, reducing viability and competitiveness, encouraging weed invasion and surface damage. Mature plants above 15cms are often less palatable, more fibrous and less digestible. Rotate horses at 3-5 day intervals and either graze-off mature pastures with cattle or sheep, or slash, to maintain a vigorous, highly digestible and productive growth of pasture.

Handy Hint 2

Handy Hint 3

Loose Shoes During Wet Weather

If you have a battle keeping shoes from working loose under wet conditions, try placing a smear of silastic sealant over the clinches. Simply brush to clean the hoof wall around each clinch, use methylated spirits to clean off oils and then carefully dab and spread a layer of silastic sealant over each clinch head and hole. Stand the horse on a hard surface for 10 minutes until the silastic cures. The silastic will prevent water softening the anchorage area for the clinches and will prevent them from being pulled in to loosen the shoe. Alternately, barefoot trimming by a skilled practitioner is an option.

Tail Rubbing

Adult egg-laden female Pinworms can lay up to 600 eggs in a sticky, itchy mass around a horse's anus. This causes the horse to rub the tail and can result in a 'dunny brush' tail. The skin on the tail or back legs can be damaged, leading to bacterial infection or invasion by fungi. An effective way to control Pinworms in combination with your worming program is to regularly wash around the anus, buttocks and under the tail with warm soapy water and a cloth.

Handy Hint 4

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Handy Hints - Travelling

- Prior to transporting a horse over 300km or for more than 4 hours duration, ensure adequate fluid balance by providing water and salts, such as **Kohnke's Own Cell Salts** daily, reduce the concentrate portion of the feed and replace it with good quality dampened lucerne hay during the 48hrs prior to travelling to reduce dust inhalation, provide stomach buffering, maintain a reserve of fluid in the hind gut and reduce the risk of hind limb 'puffiness' when standing during travel.
- A double dose of **Kohnke's Own Mag-E** given for the last 4 days prior to travel and on the morning of the trip at least 30 mins before loading will help maintain normal relaxed nervous function during travel in an anxious traveller.
- If a horse is known to suffer from travel anxiety or goes off its feed after long distance travel, particularly following the return trip from competition, then offering 4 litres of slightly dampened lucerne chaff, 3-4 scoopsful of **Kohnke's Own Gastro-Coat** and 2 tablespoonsful of limestone powder (eg Ag-Lime) will help gastric buffering during travelling and maintain normal gastric function to minimise stomach 'burn' and risk of gastric ulcers during long distance travel. A similar meal given at each rest stop and on arrival will help an anxious traveller avoid the discomfort of gastric irritation during and following travelling.
- Check before travelling that the horse has no signs of developing respiratory disease, such as an elevated temperature above 38.5°C, depression or loss of appetite. Delay long distance travel if respiratory disease is suspected, as severe lung infection may result. Seek veterinary advice if necessary.

Did you know that...

The risk of severe lung infection resulting from inhaled dust and bacteria from the upper airways into the lungs during exercise on dusty arenas, trails or showgrounds is greatly increased if a horse is travelled over a long distance within a few hours of competition. Delay travel for at least 12 hours after hard exercise under dusty conditions. Feeding at ground level will allow airway drainage to help prepare the horse for the trip home.

- Ensure adequate ventilation in the transport vehicle.
- Don't tie the horse's lead too short so that the head is held high because lung fluid will be retained. Tie loosely to allow the horse to put its head down below chest height.
- Plan rest stops every 4-6 hours, unload the horse and walk it for 10-15 minutes in a safe area to assist limb and hoof circulation and gut movement. Provide dampened hay on the ground to assist airway drainage and offer water to drink. Clean out droppings from floato reduce irritating ammonia from building up.
- Pay particular attention for signs of respiratory disease or colic developing in a horse that has been recently travelled a long distance. Seek veterinary advice if there are any concerns.

Handy Hints - Holidays

Some helpful tips If you plan to go away this holiday season and have someone look after your horse.

- Write down clear instructions on feed times, rug changes, turn-out times and special needs for particular horses.
- Make sure carers know the location of halters, lead ropes, hoses, tap fittings, buckets, power points in stable areas and the fuse box, wire cutters, water troughs, rugs and anything else you think they might need to know. Leave your phone number along with a friend's number and the number for the vet.
- If you plan to simplify or change your horse's diet for the time you'll be away, introduce this change over a 5-7 day period before you go away in case the horse refuses a new feed and to help prevent colic from a sudden change in feed.

Handy Hints - Beating the Heat

Did you know that...

Horses relocated from cooler climates can slowly develop 'non-sweating' disease or 'anhidrosis' (dry coat) when exposed to hot, humid Northern Australian conditions. This is caused by a reduction in the adrenaline hormone response to stimulate sweating and the sweat glands reduce in size. Severely affected horses virtually cease sweating which can increase the risk of heat stress and collapse during and following exercise if they are not quickly cooled.

- After exercise, when the air flow over the body is reduced, 60% of the heat trapped in the working muscles is transferred quickly by blood to a 'heat sink' in the hind gut. This prevents the muscles 'cooking' and being damaged by the accumulated heat. The hindgut holds up to 60 litres of water trapped in fibre which stores the excess heat for slow dissipation during 'cool out' after exercise. It takes up to 6 hours to 'off load' heat in this way under hot conditions.
- Remove protective bandages or boots as soon as the horse finishes working. The horse can be walked back to the stables from the work area without the boots to allow the tendons to start to cool. Studies have shown that tendon temperatures can rise up to 45°C during exercise. The temperature can rise a further degree to 46°C in the 5-10 minutes after exercise because the cooling effect of air passing over the legs ceases and the perfusion of blood through the tendon structures is reduced when the horse stops working. If not cooled, the tendon fibres can be damaged which can lead to future injury. After exercise, hose legs or apply large volume ice packs as soon as possible to reduce tendon temperatures.
- Scrape off water when hosing a horse to cool it after exercise. This will remove the warmed water & allow the horse to cool more quickly. Repeat hosing and removal of water from the belly area (to cool the 'heat sink') several times to help cool a hot horse after it has worked.
- Avoid fitting 'floating boots' in preparation for travel for at least 10-15 minutes following strenuous exercise to reduce overall tendon heat, this is especially important in hot weather.
- Ensure the horse has cool, clean water at all times. Horses can drink up to 50 litres of water per day under hot conditions.
- Provide salt at the rate of 20g (1tbsp) per 150kg body weight daily to meet sodium and chloride losses in sweat. Horses in training should be supplemented with potassium and magnesium salts, as well as ordinary salt to replace electrolyte losses. **Kohnke's Own Cell Salts & Troppo-Salts** are an economical way to supply these additional salts when supplemented on a 'one-for-one' measure with plain salt in the feed.

First Aid for Heat Stress

If a horse shows signs of heat stress, exhibited by weakness, incoordination, blowing or collapse, continuously apply cold water (even ice blocks or cubes wrapped in a towel) to the belly, flanks and topline. This will remove excess heat quickly and efficiently until symptoms are relieved.

- If you are working or competing a horse under very hot conditions, pre-cooling by hosing the body over once and spraying cold water under the belly for 2-3 minutes will remove accumulated heat before exercise. The horse will be dried off by the airflow as it works, further cooling it which, when combined with the 'pre-cooling' belly hosing, will give an extra 10-15 minutes or more before the horse will start to feel 'hot & bothered' when exercising. Do not hose the legs and do not 'pre-cool' tendons before exercising as this will reduce the elasticity of the tendons and can be a risk for injury.
- Don't forget to keep yourself cool and hydrated when working with horses or competing in hot weather! It's no fun returning from a nice outing with your horse sunburnt & sick from heat stroke.

Handy Hints - Splints

- If a splint remains sore and reactive to touch for more than 7-10 days, it should be x-rayed to investigate the presence of a bone fracture. Some horses with high fractures will not show signs of lameness. In older fractures of a splint, the lower end of the splint bone, or a section within the fracture lines may have become devitalised due to poor blood supply. Often, a soft, painful swelling, which bursts through the skin will develop due to infection (osteomyelitis) within the dead, dissolving bone. Surgical removal of the fragments is the only form of treatment. Consult your vet for advice.

First Aid for New Splints

Early recognition and management to settle down a new splint is essential. The rapidly developing splint usually indicates an underlying fracture or severe tear of the interosseous ligament.

ICE - PRESSURE - BANDAGING - REST

Ice the area 3-4 times a day for 15-20 minutes at a time. Apply an elastic pressure bandage to help settle the bony reaction. Confinement to a stable or small yard for a 4-6 week period will help reduce swelling. Remember to cut back the energy content in the ration to avoid 'frisky' behaviour in the resting horse. The use of topical antiinflammatories, such as DMSO, applied twice daily as directed for 7-10 days will also help reduce bone surface reaction. Consult your vet for advice. A step-wise return to work can be initiated after the horse has been rested, avoiding heavy loading exercise (jumping and galloping) and hard, concussive surface, as well as deep, loose surfaces.

- Existing splints in young horses can 'grow out' as the bones remodel up to the age of around 5 years. On older horses, where a bony splint has been present for more than 6 months, surgical removal may be recommended. Seek advice from your vet to investigate whether this might be the best course of action for your horse.
- Home remedy 1 - Wrap a thick (2cm), refrigerated slice of orange or lemon in kitchen film (to minimise irritation to the skin from the juice). Then bandage cut flat side over the splint. Leave on the splint swelling overnight. Repeat each night for 14-21 days. The fluid filled cellular texture of the fruit helps maintain even pressure over the splint and may help dissolve underlying bone in an old splint.
- Home remedy 2 - Apply a liberal coating of a clay poultice or castor oil to the splint area and cover with a light bandage overnight for 3-4 weeks.

Handy Hint - Lacerations

Cuts in the area of joints can cause significant problems if the joint capsule has been penetrated. It is particularly important to seek veterinary attention if you think this might be the case. If a yellowish or straw coloured fluid oozes from a cut near a joint structure, collect a small droplet on your thumb. Touch the droplet between your thumb and fore finger, then carefully pull the fingers apart. If the fluid 'strands' and doesn't break until the fingers are 3mm or more apart, the fluid is joint or tendon fluid. Seek veterinary attention. If the fluid drop does not 'strand' and breaks within 1-2mm, then it is most likely to be serum or blood fluid from tissue swelling and inflammation.

The wire cut that is draining blood and fluids in the photo above right might look small, however it was deep and the joint capsule had been penetrated, eventually requiring the joint to be flushed after infection set in. The vet is injecting saline solution into the joint and the solution, along with the products of the joint infection are draining out through the original wire cut.



Handy Hints - Ulcers

Did you know that...

- » *Up to 90% of horses in race and event training have eroded and ulcerated surfaces of the non-glandular stomach area.*
- » *Dressage horses have the highest incidence of ulcers in equestrian horses (60%), possibly caused by abdominal muscle contraction when collected under saddle and driving with their hindquarters.*
- » *100% of foals that have been stressed due to separation, injury or sickness develop gastric ulcers. Grinding their teeth when standing and refusing to eat are signs of gastric ulcers in foals.*
- » *Less than 10% of horses at pasture have gastric irritation or ulcers,*
- If you suspect ulcers seek veterinary advice and your vet may prescribe anti-ulcer medication.
- Try to give horses 2-3 small feeds daily when stabled without access to grazing.
- Preferably feed at ground level to encourage chewing and slow feed consumption.
- 'Long chop' or 'rough cut' chaff with a length of 2-4cm has been shown to facilitate chewing and salivation as compared to fine cut chaff. Saliva acts as a buffer to reduce the effects of stomach acid on the lining of the stomach.
- Feed around 1/4 of a biscuit of lucerne hay or 500g of lucerne chaff before the horse is exercised. This is especially important if the horse is stabled and has not eaten for several hours, or overnight. This will buffer the gastric contents during exercise and limit stomach content 'splash' that can irritate the upper non-glandular area of the stomach that is not protected by an acid resistant mucous coating. See handy hint on page 2 under travelling
- **Kohnke's Own Gastro-Coat** can be given as a slurry paste by syringe within 5-10 minutes **before** each feed for 2-3 days. Administer immediately after mixing with water before it turns into a thick, sticky gel. This will help maintain salivation and normal stomach wall conditions. It can also be mixed in the top layer of a **dry** feed so that the horse consumes it before the bulk of the feed.

Preventing Algal Growth in Water Troughs

To prevent algal growth in water troughs during the summer months, add copper sulfate (bluestone) at the rate of 1/4 teaspoonful (1g) per 200 litres of water in a clean and freshly filled trough. Clean and refill troughs weekly to control algae. Copper at this concentration is safe for horses and may be beneficial as an additional source of copper, particularly for young growing horses to assist cartilage development.

Handy Hint 6

Making Water 'Tasty'

Many horses will not readily drink tank or town water when they have been used to drinking 'earthy' dam or creek water. This can be a problem when relocating a horse or when dams or creeks dry up in drought or during a hot and dry summer. To make the 'clean' water more 'tasty' and 'earthy', add a handful of clean, clay or topsoil per 100 litres of water and mix with a stick. Gradually reduce the amount added to each refill of 'clean' water until the horses are used to the less 'tasty' water.

Handy Hint 7



Handy Hints - Summer Pests

- Over summer, the small black housefly (*Musca domestica*) often swarms in large numbers making life annoying for horses, with tail 'swishing and swatting' almost non-stop during daylight hours. A light cotton or hessian 'air flow' protective sheet and neck cover will help keep most flies off the upper body. A fly veil helps prevent them congregating on the moist areas around the eyes and forehead. An oily fly repellent, such as Flygon®, is very useful because the repellent action lasts longer due to its slow release from the oily base, as compared to the common alcohol evaporative bases which only remain active for 2-3 hours. Apply 3 'squirts' of Flygon onto the end of the tail (hold it together as a brush) each morning to give long-lasting fly repellent action, even in wet conditions! The horse will 'swish' and deposit the repellent onto the most 'worried' areas within a few minutes.
- A lotion made from a mixture of menthol rubbing gel in warm water is helpful to repel midges. I recommend mixing 1 tablespoonful each of Rapigel® (Menthol gel) and Aloe Vera gel (to assist skin healing) into 200mL of warm water to form a strong menthol lotion. Store the lotion in a sealed glass jar and swab onto the affected areas over the ears, wither and tail-butt each evening before midges begin to swarm. It appears that midges which are not sensitive to conventional fly repellents dislike biting through menthol residue on the skin. I have found this procedure to be up to 90% effective in reactive horses. The residue of the lotion can be gently removed using a warm damp Chux® wipe the following morning after removing the rug or before turning the horse out.

Handy Hint 10

Handy Hints - Bushfire Safety

Don't Leave it until the Fire is Raging

If high risk conditions are expected, move your horses to a safer area - eg paddocks with minimal grass and deciduous European trees, which are safer than Eucalypts and Pine trees as they are less likely to catch fire from ember showers.

Protect Your Horses during Evacuation

If you have to walk your horse(s) to safety in the midst of a fire storm, or following the fire, you must keep your horses as safe and protected as possible:

- Use only leather headstalls (plastic/nylon ones can melt) and long cotton lead ropes - wet the ropes.
- Remove plastic fly shields - fit string veils and wet them before moving the horses near the fire.
- Place on a cotton or canvas rug for body protection - wet it thoroughly - prevent the horse's body being burned - do not use a synthetic rug.
- Dampen towels to hold over their noses and heads.
- Do not turn your horse free onto a road during a fire as it is illegal to do so and it may cause an accident or suffer injury to itself.
- Wrap the hooves in cotton bandages - saturate the bandages with water and take a watering can of water to regularly wet the hooves when walking on hot ground. Wet the horse's mane, tail and legs before walking out. Protect yourself with sturdy boots, gloves, hat (a hard hat or riding helmet if possible), wet your clothes and wear a dust mask to avoid smoke inhalation.

Dampening Hay the Easy Way

Dry hay is a source of dust and mould that can be inhaled as a horse eats. Dry hay is also more easily wasted, with up to 50% pulled apart and dropped as the horse eats! The simplest way to dampen hay is to place the allocated portion into a clean polywoven chaff bag and spray or pour 1-2 litres of clean (preferably warm) water over the narrow cut edge so that it soaks down through the hay, with excess water draining out through the bag. Stand for 10 minutes and then feed.

Handy Hint 8

You can prepare hay in this way in the morning for the evening feed and vice-versa, but don't let it remain damp for more than 12 hours.

Stable Draughts

It's surprising where cold air can enter through a stable door or wall. Cold air is heavier and lingers at ground level. Warm air rises from horses in a ventilated stable, creating eddies of cool air drawn from outside. To check for chilling draughts, especially during windy weather, light a candle and move it around the inside border of the stable at floor level to observe deflection of the flame in the direction of air movement. Then check for holes, gaps or cracks. While some airflow is essential to maintain stable air quality, cool air from aisle or walkways is preferred to cold external air entering through outside walls. Be careful - don't let bedding catch fire!

Handy Hint 9

Provide Hydration Fluid after Competing & Travelling

Studies have shown that horses prefer to drink cool (not cold) water from the 'hose end' or preferably lukewarm water after exercise. Many people condition horses to drink molasses water or weak rehydration fluids after exercise each day. One cheap and highly effective way of rehydrating a horse after daily exercise, travelling or at a competition, is to provide 5 litres of lukewarm water (eg add hot water from a thermos to cold water) containing 50g (2 ½ tablespoonsful) of plain, fine table salt (it dissolves quickly) and 50g glucose or dextrose (glucose assists sodium uptake from the small intestine) to ensure its palatability. Horses can be conditioned to drink the warm, salty water after each training session by offering it in the wash bay in a small tub or bowl/dish - after a couple of days they will begin to drink the fluid and once 'hooked' on it, it is an easy, effective way of rehydrating a horse within 5-10 minutes after training, or following a competition before the return trip to home stables.

Product of the Month



Hoof-Seal

- * Easy to apply and economical - doesn't come off on your hands.
- * Helps keep the hooves in a natural, flexible condition.
- * No mess, doesn't melt off or become 'mucky' with dust or shavings.
- * Only needs to be applied at weekly intervals under normal conditions.

Sizes: 500mL can with Built-in Brush Cap, 2 litre refill can, 20L drums

Handy Hint: On competition day, mix 10mL Blac-It™ with 40mL Hoof-Seal and paint a thin coating on the hoof wall to give an even, medium gloss sheen to the hooves. Stays on well but can be easily removed with water & a stiff brush.

Disclaimer: The information and recommendations in this newsletter have been presented as a guideline based on the veterinary experience and knowledge of the author, Dr John Kohnke BVSc RDA. Whilst all care, diligence and years of practical experience have been combined to produce this information, the author/editor, Dr John Kohnke, accepts no responsibility or liability for unforeseen consequences resulting from the hints and advice given in this newsletter.

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