

# McGonnell & Gillatt

Equine Veterinary Practice Ltd

Autumn 2011

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# SAVE UP TO £60

With our special  
Autumn offer!

Get your foal Microchipped, passport silhouette and its first Flu-Tet inoculation done before 31 December and save yourself up to £60.00.

Legislation requires that all horses have to have a **passport** and that foals must be microchipped and have a markings chart completed by 31 December in the year of birth or before 6 months of age whichever is earlier. After 31<sup>st</sup> December Stud Book Registration can become substantially more expensive and difficult!!

As a special offer up to 31 December 2011, we can complete a markings chart for your passport application, supply and insert a microchip and start you horse's Flu & Tet inoculations. All for £80 including Vat. If you book this on one of Free Zone Days then potentially you could save up to £60!

Still not got a passport for your horse – here is your opportunity to get started with this offer. Remember it only runs to 31 December!

**INSURANCE** – Remember to forward all your invoices for any work related to a claim to your insurance company. Changes in the law mean that they cannot discuss your claim with us so we would be grateful if you could keep us informed of the progress of your claim. From 1<sup>st</sup> January the vets will complete their section of the claim form and it will be returned to you to forward to your insurance company with any relevant invoices.

### FREE ZONE VISITS

The **Free Zone Visits** have been a great success both with clients and with the vets who are enjoying getting to know the yards in their own areas. The popularity of these visits has meant that we have had to re-draw the boundaries in order to accommodate the increased demand in certain areas and to maintain the efficiency of the service. These new boundaries will take effect on 1<sup>st</sup> January and an updated map will be available on our website soon. [www.horse-vets.com](http://www.horse-vets.com)

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## ALLERGIC

As autumn draws in and many horses start to be stabled for longer periods, it is time to think about air cleanliness and the effects of the unnatural environment we put our horses in.

## AIRWAY

There are many different names for Allergic Airway Disease – COPD, RAO, SPAOD, IAD, Asthma, Heaves. Even if it hasn't been diagnosed as such, do you recognise the symptoms of an annual "winter cough" in your horse, and soak the hay to help matters? Are there globs of mucus outside your horse's stable door in the mornings? These are all symptoms more likely to occur later in life (usually teens), and may not be noticeable in younger horses, but will often worsen as each year goes by.

## DISEASE

There are plenty of things we can do to help prevent these problems, but it all comes down to the initiating factors – ALLERGENS. Common allergens include:

By

- **hay dust and spores**
- pollens
- smoke (cigarette smoke, smouldering muck heaps, car fumes)
- dust from grooming, harvesting, or dusty ménages
- ammonia from smelly urine-soaked bedding (or a next-door neighbour's smelly bed!)

Ellen

Harris

We have even had a case of a pony being allergic to a neighbour's particularly pungent fly repellent!

BVSc

Once an overload of a certain allergen takes place and the horse's respiratory system becomes sensitised then often the horse will become sensitive to other allergens. Sometimes the initiating factor is a virus, and a horse may become super-sensitive to allergens whilst his immune system is compromised by the virus.

BSc

MRCVS

For all these reasons it is hugely important to try to reduce the load of potential allergens that a horse breathes in on a daily (and hourly!) basis. This is vital in trying to prevent allergic airways later in life, or trying to control the symptoms in those horses already sensitised. Even a few minutes of inhaling an allergen can lead to days of airway inflammation, as a vicious circle of airway muscle spasm and inflammation kicks in.

One of the biggest ways of improving air quality is to improve stable airflow. An open window in the stable on the *same side* as the door does very little (if anything) to improve things. A *through* flow of air is needed, so a window or vent in a different wall from the door is ideal, and should be kept open in all but the very foulest of weather. Use an extra rug if you feel it is too drafty. Of course, the ideal situation for respiratory health is 24/7 turnout, but this is often not possible in livery conditions. Sometimes moving yards for full turnout is the only answer.

Other changes to reduce inhaled allergens include soaking or steaming hay for 20-30 mins, or switching to good quality haylage. This is still important when being fed outside, as there are still plenty of dust and mould spores in the breathing zone.

Bedding should also be changed to something dust-free, such as dust-extracted shavings, paper, or shredded cardboard, and any kind of deep litter system should be totally avoided. Beware of your neighbours' routines too – if they are still bedded on straw, and create dust clouds when mucking out, or deep-littered, or feeding non-soaked hay, then your horse may still be inhaling plenty of allergens, despite your best efforts.

Be careful when grooming – ALWAYS groom outside, and make sure the dust cloud you create is moving downwind AWAY from your horse's head. Also make sure you are not downwind of somebody else's grooming dust cloud. Grooming dust is very often forgotten about, and you can often get a completely normal horse out to go riding, but after 10 mins of grooming he can be coughing or wheezing, or you're wondering why he doesn't feel very perky.

See how dusty your rugs are – if you see a big plume of dust when you throw it on, then you can take an educated guess at what to do about it!

Watch out for smoke – the muck heap fire which smoulders on for weeks is a big problem for sensitive horses, as smoke is a serious respiratory irritant. Obviously cigarette smoke is not ideal *anywhere* on a yard due to the massive fire hazard, but it does happen, and if there's a "smokers corner" on the yard, have a very careful look at where the smoke's going.

The final way to help prevent respiratory problems is to keep vaccinations up to date – we recommend that all horses and ponies are vaccinated against Influenza, as it is around. Another respiratory virus which is easy to keep at bay with vaccination is Equine Herpes. This is probably more common than anybody knows about, but vaccination against it is often considered an unnecessary extra expense. Have a think about how much time off a horse needs when he comes down with "a virus" – chances are it may well be Equine Herpes, and could have been avoided. Keeping viruses away will reduce the possibility of your horse getting a more complicated secondary bacterial respiratory infection, and reduce the chances of becoming hypersensitised to the unavoidable allergens.

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