

# WINGHAM & VALLEY VETS

Newsletter

July 2019

Volume 14

## *Hendra in the Hunter Valley should be a concern to all horse owners and handlers*

As many of you would be aware, this month there was a case of Hendra virus in Scone. This came as a shock to many horse owners who felt safe because they weren't in a 'Hendra Zone' (previously believed to be Northern NSW and Queensland). This belief has led to widespread complacency amongst horse owners, with many feeling they didn't have to worry about vaccinating their horses because Hendra virus couldn't happen in their area. What is particularly concerning about the case in Scone, is that black-headed flying foxes have never been seen on that property. What we do know is that this mare had been on the property for a very long time and must have acquired the virus in Scone.

### **Here are some key facts everyone should be aware of:**

- 1. Hendra virus is deadly to horses and people- it can pass from an infected horse to owners, handlers and their family.**
- 2. Hendra virus is here to stay. A case will occur in and around the Manning Valley, it is only a matter of time.**
- 3. Hendra is unpredictable – you don't have to see bats on your property to be at risk and the symptoms are highly variable.**
- 4. Wingham's bats carry Hendra virus so the potential for spill over into the local horse population is high.**
- 5. Vaccination is the ONLY effective prevention measure available to us currently.**
- 6. Vaccine reactions are rare and generally very mild. The Hendra vaccine is proven to have a lower reaction rate than the Tetanus/Strangles vaccine.**
- 7. \$98 annually is a small price to pay compared to the other costs of owning a horse.**
- 8. We care for our own lives, the lives of our staff, our clients and their animals.**



Unfortunately, misinformation and scaremongering about the Hendra vaccine has resulted in many horse owners feeling sceptical or afraid of Hendra vaccination. We see a lot of particularly vocal horseowners encouraging people not to vaccinate their horses. They advise people not to listen to their vet because 'vets have an economic interest in recommending Hendra vaccination'. This is deeply insulting to a profession renowned for its integrity and founded on a love of animals.

### **Vets do not recommend Hendra vaccination to make money.**

As a Veterinarian and the wife of a Veterinarian, I recommend Hendra vaccination because I love horses and importantly, I want our staff and my husband to be able to treat sick horses, without risking their life to do so. I also want our clients and their families to be safe and this is our only way to guarantee safety from Hendra. In no other workplace is someone expected to take such risks with their health and we have a responsibility to our staff to ensure they are safe in the workplace. To clear up any misconceptions about how much the practice makes from vaccinating a horse for Hendra, here are some figures. A Hendra vaccination booster administered at our surgery costs the client \$98.

## *Cases of the Month*

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Tick Paralysis  
Salmonellosis  
Neosporosis (dog)  
Pancreatitis  
Urinary Blockage (cat)  
Retained Foetal Membranes  
Dystocia

## *Run Dates*

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Krambach: every Tuesday  
Oxley Island: fourth Thursday of every month  
Thurs 22<sup>nd</sup> August  
Thurs 26<sup>th</sup> September  
Coopernook, Lansdowne & Hannam Vale: third Wednesday of every month  
Wed 21<sup>st</sup> August  
Wed 18<sup>th</sup> September  
To book a job, please call by 5pm the day before a run.

Emergencies will be accommodated.  
Subsidised travel fees.

**6557 0000**

## *In the spotlight: Retained Foetal Membranes*



*After calving, membranes are usually expelled within 8hrs. If they have not been passed within 24hrs, we describe the condition as retained foetal membranes (RFM). RFM cows have increased risk of metritis, mastitis, ketosis and LDA. Any cow with RFM should be closely monitored.*

We do not get too concerned about RFM for 2-3 days post calving. If they are still retained at 4 days, we recommend a vet visit to remove them and to assess the cow for infection (metritis occurs in 25-50% of RFM cases). After RFM, the pregnancy rate at next joining decreases by 15%. Overall incidence of RFM is ~8%, but this can vary between 4-40% dependent on management factors. Record all cows with RFM and if the herd incidence is over 10%, we recommend a herd health consultation.

After calving, the cow's immune system destroys the unions between the placenta and uterus, allowing the membranes to come away. If the immune system is weak, it fails to degrade the unions and RFM occurs. Important factors affecting the likelihood of developing RFM are:

- Blood calcium levels
- Mineral or vitamin deficiency (Selenium & Vitamin E): ensure a balanced dry cow ration
- Excessive bodyweight loss: near the end of the dry period provide easy access to palatable food to stimulate appetite
- Quality silages: avoid exposure to mould and mycotoxins
- Infection: Brucellosis, Leptospirosis, IBR, pestivirus
- Difficult birth, twins, stillbirth, abortion, excessive stress or obesity

Don't pull the membranes out. Trimming the foetal membranes may decrease bacterial contamination, however there will then be less weight and less constant gentle traction encouraging the membranes to come away.

We need to pay GST to the government, so we minus \$9.80 from that (\$88.20 left). To buy the vaccine from our supplier costs \$56 (\$32.20 left). We need to pay a vet for their professional time to assess the health of the horse and administer the vaccination, and pay a nurse for their time to put the details on the Hendra registry, at a total cost of approximately \$24 in wages and superannuation – so at most, the practice might make \$8.20 on a Hendra vaccination – and that's not even accounting for the considerable costs of running a veterinary practice (e.g. overheads, insurance, rent, freight) - hardly incentive for vets to embark on a nation-wide conspiracy to encourage Hendra vaccination... unless we really believe it is in the best interests of the horses and their owners!!

No-one wants to risk death or permanent disability, and vets are no exception. Nor do we wish to refuse service to unvaccinated horses for our own protection. The Manning Valley has now had a case North of us and a case South of us, so it isn't a matter of **if** we will see a Hendra outbreak, it is **when**. The bats in Wingham Brush are proven to carry Hendra virus and the 'viral load' in these bats is among the highest in the country. We know it is worrisome when you see posts on Facebook about 'complications' from Hendra vaccination but remember, the best person to give you honest, up-to-date and factual advice about Hendra vaccination is your Vet and we are happy to discuss this with you any time.

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### *Staff Training Updates*

Continuing education is always a major priority and our staff have attended some fantastic training courses recently. Amber and Rachel attended the Annual Vet Nurse's conference in Brisbane and brought back some great knowledge about managing complicated anaesthetics, getting accurate blood pressure measurements in dogs and cats and dental radiography.

Michael attended a two-day 'Masterclass in Fracture Fixation' in Brisbane where he built on his knowledge about orthopaedic surgery – primarily the application of bone plates to repair complex fractures and learning about the new technology of locking plates. Michael really enjoyed the course and came home with a long wish list for new orthopaedic equipment, to ensure we are always offering the best for our patients.

Alissa recently completed a course in canine and feline Ophthalmology. We see a lot of eye cases and want to be able to offer our patients a rapid, accurate diagnosis to maximise the chances of recovery. The course placed particular emphasis on the conditions most commonly seen in general practice such as corneal ulcers, eyelid diseases, uveitis and glaucoma. The course was excellent, and Alissa is going to present the material to all the vets at our weekly continuing education meeting.

### *In-house Progesterone testing now available*

In-house progesterone is now available and is already proving extremely useful for timing caesareans and matings, with very rapid, accurate results. This makes it much easier for breeders to have access to multiple progesterone levels without waiting 24 hours for results.

## Staffing Updates

We are saying farewell to Dr. Leigh Moyle this August, who is heading overseas with his partner for an extended period. Thank you very much Leigh for all your hard work and we hope you enjoy your time in Greece! We have been advertising for another Vet and were lucky to receive a high number of high quality applications – a great result in the current employment market where experienced mixed practice Vets are very rare! We are very pleased the practice has such a good reputation amongst Vets who are looking for positions. We are hoping we can introduce our new Vet to you all very soon and we know they will be a fantastic addition to our team.

## Paralysis Ticks are out and about

We have been seeing cases of tick paralysis in dogs, calves and small horses. In this area it is very important that your pets are on a tick preventative all year round as we tend to see paralysis cases year-round. Having as many pets as possible on an effective tick preventative saves many lives, because not all dogs and cats will recover from tick paralysis, even with effective treatment. We believe Bravecto is so effective at preventing tick paralysis that we are offering our clients a Bravecto Tick Guarantee: **If we treat your dog or cat with a Bravecto chewable tablet or spot-on and they get tick paralysis within 90 days (chewable) or 180 days (spot-on) after treatment, we will treat your pet in our hospital for free.** To ensure you pet is always protected, we will also send you an automated reminder every 90 or 180 days, via SMS or email to notify you that your pet is due for their tick preventative. To be eligible, the product must be purchased from us and applied by one of our staff members.



## Exciting new equipment!

This month we upgraded our IDEXX haematology blood machine to the newest model. Although our old machine has been fantastic, the updated machine uses technology that is equivalent to the large blood machines used in human pathology labs. This machine will be invaluable for diagnosing and managing sick patients and it also enables us to analyse body fluids other than blood such as cerebrospinal fluid, chest fluid and joint fluid.

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