

WINGHAM & VALLEY VETS

Newsletter

November 2018

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Cycad Palms are extremely toxic to pets

Deadly Cycad (Sago) palms have been spotted on sale in the major supermarkets. Unfortunately, they are a very popular garden plant, however if you own a dog or cat please do not buy this toxic plant and remove any you already have from your garden immediately. Pets are poisoned by eating the seed pods of the plant. Sometimes we will see poisonings in animals that have had a Cycad in their yard for years and then suddenly for an unknown reason they decide to eat the seed pods and become very ill.

Symptoms of cycad toxicity include vomiting, diarrhoea, loss of appetite, abdominal pain and lethargy. Ingesting a Cycad can cause acute terminal liver failure and sadly some dogs will not recover from this. We have recently seen a case of Cycad poisoning in a young dog. Luckily her owners brought her in to us very quickly for severe lethargy and vomiting. She was placed on intravenous fluids and blood tests revealed severe liver disease. Our vet asked the owners about whether they had any Cycad palms and they advised there was one in their pool area. Only one week after this we saw a second dog for acute Cycad poisoning. Luckily, with prompt treatment both dogs survived but many affected animals will sadly die despite intensive care, so it is much better to avoid exposure to these plants altogether. If you have any questions, please contact us on 65570000.



Don't forget to order Three Day Sickness vaccine ASAP



We are currently doing a lot of orders for three-day sickness vaccine (bovine ephemeral fever). Ideally stock should be vaccinated well before the three-day sickness season starts so that they have adequate immunity. The three-day sickness season is from January to

April with the peak number of cases in March. The virus is transmitted by mosquitoes and causes a very high fever (41°C), sudden and severe decrease in milk production, reduced appetite, drooling, joint stiffness and pain and affected animals often go down. Many animals will recover in 3 days, but bulls and fat cows tend to be much more severely affected and some may die. **Affected bulls may have reduced fertility for up to 6 months and in some cases it can be permanent.** It is therefore highly recommended to vaccinate bulls, very valuable stock and dairy herds. Please contact us ASAP to order your vaccine. We recommend vaccinating animals twice in the first year (doses at least 2 weeks apart) and then annually.

Cases of the Month

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Equine Colic
Tick Paralysis
Cycad Toxicity
Late-term abortion (cattle)
Feline Pancreatitis
Twisted uterus (cow)
Mastitis
Uterine prolapse
Sciatic nerve paralysis (calving paralysis)

Run Dates

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Krambach: every Tuesday

Comboyne: second Thursday of every month
Thurs 13th December
Thurs 10th January

Oxley Island: fourth Thursday of every month
Thurs 20th December
(due to Christmas)
Thurs 24th January

Coopernook, Lansdowne & Hannam Vale: third Wednesday of every month
Wed 19th December
Wed 16th January

To book a job, please call by 5pm the day before a run.

Emergencies will be accommodated.

Subsidised travel fees.

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In the spotlight:



Persistence pays off for one very dedicated Beef farmer and his very valuable bull.

We were called out to examine a very valuable 3yo Angus stud bull who had been lethargic and losing weight over a 3-week period. He wasn't eating well and didn't feel much like serving the cows. He had a temperature of 40°C and because we could not hear his lungs on the right side, we suspected a septic pyothorax. This is a condition where bacteria enter the chest cavity where the lungs are sitting, and the chest fills up with bacteria-laden pus. We did an ultrasound scan of the chest wall and could see what looked like an abscess inside his chest. After administering some local anaesthetic, we inserted a tube into the chest cavity and drained **30 litres** of pus out of the bull's chest. We left the chest tube indwelling, to allow repeated saline flushing and drainage of the abscess cavity. We advised the owner that the prognosis for this bull's survival was very guarded, but he wanted us to do everything we could to fix him. Every four days one of our vets revisited the bull to flush more pus out of the chest cavity – all in all, he had over 20 visits!!! We were so happy to see him recently, out in the paddock serving cows and getting them in calf. It is a fantastic outcome certainly a credit to his very caring and committed owner, and to the vets Pete and Mick who never gave up on him and persisted until he was cured. ***If you would like to see a video of the pus being drained out of this bull's chest and another video of him completely recovered, head on over to our Facebook page!***



New Tick Paralysis Preventative for Cats

We have been seeing a lot of tick paralysis cases this year – many more than last year. Most cases we have seen have been in dogs and cats that are not on any tick preventatives at all. Sadly, not all animals that are affected by tick paralysis will recover, hence the

importance of regular and effective prevention. We generally recommend either Nexgard or Bravecto for dogs. **It has always been difficult to prevent tick paralysis in cats because of a lack of easy to use registered products. Luckily Bravecto for cats has now arrived and is both easy to use and highly effective, offering 3 months of tick prevention.** Previously the only registered product for tick prevention in cats was Frontline spray, which must be applied every 2 weeks throughout the tick season. Bravecto for cats is the preventative of choice for our staff. Unlike Bravecto for dogs, it is not swallowed, it is applied on the back of the neck and appears to be very well tolerated by our cats.

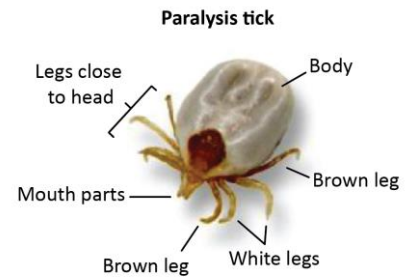
Please ensure you check your pets daily for paralysis ticks and contact your vet straight away if you notice any of the following signs: incoordination or a wobbly gait, difficulty getting up or hindleg weakness, breathing difficulty or regurgitation. If you find a tick on your pet, we would recommend pulling it straight off and placing it in a jar for identification. Animals that are showing signs of tick paralysis will almost always get worse before they get better, which is why it is important to seek prompt veterinary attention. The antidote that we administer to animals with tick paralysis acts by 'mopping up' any free tick toxin in the animal's blood so any toxin that is already 'bound' to their muscles cannot be reversed. The dog or cat has to break down this toxin over a number of days so it is much better to treat these cases early, before animals are severely affected.

Introducing our new nurses Bec and Rachel!

There have been some new faces around the hospital this year. We have had a very busy 12 months and because of this we made the decision to bring some



new nurses into our current team, so we can maintain excellent standards of patient care. Bec & Rachel have been wonderful additions to the practice. Their love of animals, caring natures and excellent nursing skills mean they are both true assets to our nurse team. We already enjoy working with them very much and are so glad they have joined us.



Staff Training Updates

We have started having a 1-hour in-house training session every week (or fortnight when we are very busy!) to ensure the staff all get regular and up-to-date continuing education. Each week one of the staff presents on a topic that most interests them. Here you can see Pete presenting to the staff on taking and interpreting the perfect chest radiograph. We have also covered laboratory urinalysis, emergency CPR and dental disease in cats and dogs. In coming weeks, we will be covering the latest approaches to managing tick paralysis patients and advanced techniques for dental extractions.



What to do if your horse has colic

Colic is a common condition of horses and what we mean when we diagnose your horse with 'colic' is that they are suffering from abdominal pain. We have been seeing a high number of colic cases this Spring and some have been serious and required hospitalisation in our equine facility for ongoing monitoring and intravenous fluid therapy. Colic or abdominal pain ranges from mild to severe and can be caused by a multitude of conditions such as intestinal impaction, gut spasms, peritonitis, twisted bowel or urinary tract issues. **Not all colic cases are serious, but it is important to have a plan in place and to manage each colic case correctly.** This ensures your horse is as comfortable as possible and maximises the chance of recovery. Signs of colic include inappetance, sweating, looking at the abdomen, restlessness or pawing at the ground, kicking at the stomach, increased pulse and breathing rate and potentially rolling on the ground. Please see below for some recommendations about what you should do in case your horse develops signs of colic.

1. If safe to do so, check the horse's heart rate, temperature and breathing rate. Also record the horse's behavior (rolling, pawing stretching etc.) and the duration of symptoms. This allows you to monitor for any changes and will enable you to give your vet the maximum amount of information which aids them in diagnosing the severity of the colic.
2. Look for faeces in the paddock – it is important for us to know whether the horse has defecated, and it also allows us to note the appearance and consistency. Faeces (or the absence of faeces) can give an important clue about the cause of the colic.
3. Check the paddock for anything out of the ordinary – feed left behind, old or moldy hay, poisonous plants and any major changes to the horse's regular feeding routine.
4. Call the vet, regardless of the severity of the signs. This is because minor problems can become severe without appropriate treatment and in some cases, delay can jeopardise the horse's chance of recovery. By communicating the clinical signs to your vet, they can evaluate whether the horse needs urgent attention or simply requires ongoing monitoring.
5. Check the horse every 15-20 minutes as some colic cases can worsen rapidly.
6. Walk the horse until the vet arrives as this helps keep the gut moving and to prevent the horse injuring itself rolling. Some mild colics resolve with walking. Do not aggressively exercise the horse.
7. Don't feed the horse – remove all hay and grain from the paddock and if they are on lush pasture, move the horse off the pasture.
8. Don't give the horse any medications unless your vet directs you to do so. Giving the horse pain relief before the vet has the chance to examine the horse can mask symptoms and make it harder for your vet to accurately diagnose the severity of the colic.



9. Have the horse in a safe, well-lit area for examination. Have clean water handy in case the vet wants to stomach tube the horse.
10. Consider transport options. It can be helpful for owners to have a plan in place and access to a float, should their horse require transport to our equine facility for hospitalisation and monitoring or if the horse needs surgery at an equine referral centre.
11. Ensure your horse is vaccinated for Hendra virus. This allows both you and your Veterinarian to safely examine and treat your horse without risking health and safety.

Remember if your horse shows signs of colic, your vet is your best source of information and early veterinary examination and treatment can be critical for a successful outcome.

Preventing colic: know your risk factors!

There are several factors that increase the risk of your horse getting colic. It is important to know what these risk factors are so that you can minimize the likelihood of your horse developing colic. Prevention is always better than a cure. These risk factors include:

- Untreated dental disease
- Digestive disorders such as worm burdens and gut damage (including previous colic surgery)
- Poor feeding practices: old, moldy or dirty feed, inappropriate quantities, lack of fibre and/or water, or a sudden change in diet
- Stress such as hard exercise while unfit or after eating, travelling, sudden change of routine
- Poor and over-grazed pasture, especially if the soil is sandy

Tips on preventing colic:

- Constant supply of fresh water
- Regular dental checks and dental floats by your veterinarian. Poorly chewed food increases the risk of a blockage in the intestine.
- Ensure the diet consists of a high fibre content, using hay or other high fibre equivalent feeds. A ratio of at least 60 per cent hay or equivalent. Only use hard feed as a supplement to grazing, and if you need to feed concentrates, feed small amounts frequently.
- Ensure the feed is of good quality, is not mouldy and is free from plastic (twine etc.)
- Condition your horse appropriately, ensuring that the horse is fit for the work needed. Do not suddenly overexert your horse.
- Have a post-exercise cooling off period
- Make any changes to exercise or feed slowly
- Allow your horse to spend as much time in the paddock as possible
- Do not overgraze pasture
- Ration lush spring grass, treating it as a change of diet to the horse
- Avoid your horse grazing heavily sanded pasture
- Ensure the worm control program is kept up to date as recommended by your vet
- Have a regular daily routine and make changes gradually.

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