

# SUMMER 2011 NEWSLETTER

www.bellequine.co.uk

**BELLEQUINE**  
VETERINARY CLINIC



Trottscliffe Horse Show

## OPEN DAY

We are planning to hold another open day on **Saturday 17th September 2011** 1-5 pm

This will be the opportunity to have a relaxing visit behind the scenes and talk to members of our team. **ALL WELCOME** - watch our website for further details: [www.bellequine.com](http://www.bellequine.com)



London Test Event, courtesy Nick Bolas  
[www.hallmarq.net](http://www.hallmarq.net)

## WELCOME BACK

Regular Bell Equine newsletter readers will know that we have two interns on our team. They are vets that spend a year living in the hospital to look after the horses, ponies and donkeys under our care. This arrangement ensures there is always a vet on site at the hospital. We are delighted to welcome Keri-Lee Dobbie, who has joined us after training at the vet school in Pretoria in South Africa and spending time with us previously. Keri-Lee replaces Whitney Linnenkohl, our American intern, who has returned to the USA to work at Cornell Veterinary School.



Keri-Lee Dobbie

We would like to welcome back Alice Bird, one of our interns in 2010, who is now returning to work with us as a member of the ambulatory team. Alice replaces Zoe Windley, who is moving to do equine research at the Royal Veterinary College in London.



Alice Bird

## EQUINE FLU

Equine flu is both extremely infectious and contagious. As a disease the signs of flu can vary from a few days of running a high temperature accompanied by the classic snotty nose and harsh dry cough, to serious life-threatening infections, especially in young foals.

Vaccination is the best way of stopping the disease. It is important since firstly your horse will feel exactly the same as we do when we have the flu - rotten. In becoming infected your horse also stands a real chance of infecting many others with the virus. Finally, to compete with your horse you will need an up to date passport demonstrating your horse's vaccination status.

The benefits of vaccination were demonstrated very clearly during the 2007 Australian Equine Influenza outbreak. The horse population in Australia had never been exposed to equine flu before and so, no horses had been vaccinated. Some infected horses entered an Australian quarantine station and the virus escaped. The infection spread rapidly and a total of 76,000 horses became infected, located on more than 10,000 premises in Queensland and New South Wales. Vaccination, along with restricting horse movement, stopped this infection in its tracks and prevented the flu virus from spreading all over Australia. As a practice we have selected the most up to date vaccine for our clients. Incidentally this was the vaccine of choice in the major

Australian outbreak.

There were 10 outbreaks of flu in the UK in 2010 so we must not become complacent about vaccination. To help remind you when your horse's booster is due we are now using ProText - a personalised text message reminder service which will alert you and give you time to book your appointment. We believe we have mobile phone numbers for most clients, but please contact us to check if you are concerned. We would welcome feedback - please tell us if you prefer our new text reminder service by contacting reception on **01622 813700**.

Ultimately it is your responsibility to ensure your horses' boosters are kept up to date, but we hope this improved service helps you do so.

## CHARITY RACE FOR LIFE

Behind the scenes at Bell Equine some of our office team (Rachael, Anna, Hayley & Jan), nursing team member Becky and vet Mette Christensen took part in the recent 10 km 'Race for Life' challenge to raise money for Cancer Research. Everyone did brilliantly and completed the hard slog. If you would like to contribute to our fundraising for this amazing charity, then please visit our just giving website:

<http://www.raceforlifesporsome.org/rachaelbutler0904>

Any donations would be hugely appreciated



**BELLEQUINE VET CLINIC** Mereworth, Maidstone, Kent ME18 5GS

For **general enquiries and all visits** Tel: 01622 813700 For **hospital appointments** Linda Loines on 01622 816032 or 01622 813700  
For **account queries** Pat Oram on 01622 816033 or 01622 816036

## BONE SCANNING

We have just upgraded to a new, state of the art digital gamma camera. This is used for performing 'bone scans' and, although our old camera has served us well, we were keen to take advantage of recent technological advances in nuclear scintigraphic imaging. This ensures we can offer our clients the best equipment available. We are one of very few veterinary hospitals in the UK using this advanced technology with extremely accurate motion correction software. We are delighted with the consistently excellent images the new camera is producing to help us resolve some of our more complex orthopaedic cases. Nuclear scintigraphy or bone scanning is a now well established tool for the investigation of lameness and back pain in horses. It is a highly sensitive method of demonstrating bone injury providing a more accurate diagnosis than can be obtained by other forms of imaging, such as X-rays or ultrasound. A bone scan also allows imaging of sites where radiography is difficult such as the spine, ribs and pelvis. If you have any questions, please contact the hospital on **01622 813700**.



## WEIGHT LOSS

Sadly, obesity is becoming more common in the horses and ponies we treat and is associated with several medical conditions, especially laminitis. Tendency to gain weight varies and some horses are exceptionally "good-doers"! We are frequently asked for advice on equine slimming.

### Weight loss tips

The equine diet should be tailored to the amount of energy the horse requires for its work. Many horses in steady work do not need large quantities of hard feed. Any diet changes should be introduced gradually and the effects of the change monitored before other changes are made.

- A horse's diet should primarily consist of fibre. This is usually provided by grass, hay or haylage or a combination of all three. Total (dry weight) recommendations for fibre are usually around 1.5–2% of bodyweight per day but can be reduced to 1–1.5% for dieting. Horses have evolved to trickle feed and in the wild would spend about 16–20 hours per day grazing slowly

often on poor pasture. On good grass horses can consume their entire daily recommended intake in a few hours, so eating time needs to be reduced. It may help by feeding less good (late cut) hay or by putting hay inside double haynets.

- Horses out on good Kent grass for 8 hours during the day can consume over twice their recommended daily feed intake on grass alone. Using a grazing muzzle can very effectively reduce the amount of grass eaten. Please introduce grazing muzzles slowly, ensure a good fit and check that the horse is able to drink normally.
- Consider strip grazing behind other horses (but remember to pick up droppings).
- Many equine centres go as far as spreading wood chippings over the paddock to slow down grazing considerably.
- Be very aware of weather and grass conditions. There are always flushes of grass after heavy rain, especially in the spring and autumn. Restrict access to lush pasture.
- Consider grazing overnight when the fructan (sugar) content of grasses is at its lowest. Restrict grazing during the late morning and early afternoon when fructan

levels are highest.

- "Stressed" overgrazed grass also tends to have a high fructan content and can be high risk.

### Hard feeds

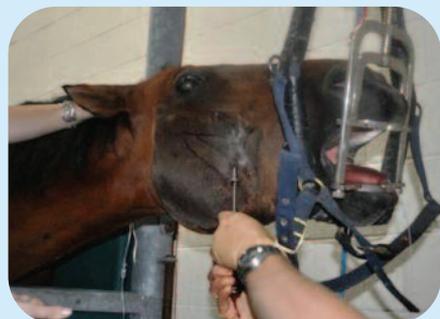
Horses in good condition in light work do not require hard feeds, but anything they are fed should be high in fibre and low in carbohydrate. Unmolassed sugar beet or high fibre pencils can be good. Higher calorie feeds such as alfalfa or higher starch mixes should be avoided.

### Exercise

Increase the horse's workload. Ideally exercise should be regular and consistent. Several longer periods of low intensity exercise are better than small numbers of short high intensity sessions. Never feed more in anticipation of increased work. Monitor your horse's progress by using a weigh tape or long piece of string to measure the reduction in girth. A calibrated weighbridge is available at our hospital and our clients are welcome to bring their horses and ponies to be weighed free of charge. Ring reception on **01622 813700** if you want to make an appointment.

## UK FIRST FOR BELL EQUINE

When the vet extracts a horse's bad tooth the aim is to extract "the tooth, the whole tooth and nothing but the tooth"! This can be a real challenge as horses' teeth have long roots embedded firmly in their sockets. It is also impossible to open the equine mouth wide enough to reach the cheek teeth at the back of the jaw properly.



Over the years we have reviewed the best approach. If possible, we like to gently loosen and extract the tooth through the mouth. Frequently this will not work and there is a serious risk of breaking the tooth and leaving fragments behind. The other option until now has involved a general anaesthetic and fairly major and potentially expensive surgery.

Rob Pascoe has recently undertaken specialist training in Europe to develop a new technique shown (left). This is a new simple and sophisticated approach to tooth extraction involving a tiny keyhole type incision through the cheek, which can be safely performed on the standing horse. We have now started using this innovative technique with great success. It allows horses undergoing treatment to recover more quickly with minimal complications. If you are interested in finding out more about our specialist dentistry services, please contact our office on **01622 813700**.

## BEYOND BELL

Our vets have been travelling to work further afield. Tim Mair has just attended the International Colic Symposium in the USA, where he presented scientific papers on various aspects of colic surgery. David Sinclair has also been in America expanding his equine lameness studies with the International Society of Equine Locomotor Pathology and will revisit the USA again in August.

Liz Barr attended the European College of Veterinary Surgeon's meeting in Ghent, Belgium, as part of her equine orthopaedics remit. Meanwhile, Julian Samuelson, Edd Knowles & Karen Coumbe have been busy as part of the London Prepares vet team at the Equine Olympic Test event in Greenwich.