Information For Clients:

Equine Influenza

Equine influenza (also known as horse flu or EI) is caused by a virus that affects the respiratory tract of horses, ponies & donkeys. The disease is very infectious and spreads rapidly. The incubation period is 1-3 days. Major risk factors include any horse, pony or donkey with a compromised immune system, either due to stress or illness, for example RAO/COPD or Cushing's disease. Foals and geriatric patients will be at higher risk of equine influenza and are likely to be the most severely affected. Donkeys tend to be hit hard by EI.

Signs of Equine influenza

- High temperature
- Depressed demeanour
- Loss of appetite
- Cough
- Nasal discharge
- A secondary bacterial infection can also occur
- In case of suspicious signs you should contact the practice.

Precautions

1. Ensure all horses, ponies & donkeys are vaccinated according to manufacturer's data sheets and up to date. This should provide protection. Do not forget to vaccinate the retired horse, who is likely to be older and more severely affected, or the stay at home horse who can get EI from horses going to competitions even if the competition horse is vaccinated.
2. Foals should be vaccinated starting at 6 months. Foals can be vaccinated younger if at high risk but ask for veterinary advice regarding this.
3. Isolate horse/pony or donkeys new to the premises for at least 2 weeks.
4. Test any suspect cases (see diagnosis below) even if this is just to rule out EI. As a sentinel practice the laboratory work can often be carried out at no cost to you.

Strict Hygiene and isolation procedures should be applied. Any horse that has been in contact with the affected horse should also be monitored and it is advised not to be transported as they may be incubating the disease (even if vaccinated). Exposure to the virus combined with the stress of travelling will make infection more likely. Steps can be taken to stop the spread of the disease including good hygiene and bio-security management to reduce the risk of in-direct contamination via water/feed buckets and equipment or handlers who come in to contact with the animal, along with isolation.

Diagnosis:

Nasopharyngeal swabs collected by a vet from the back of the throat are sent in viral transport media to the laboratory. This confirms EI if taken early on in the course of the infection. The Sentinel Practice Scheme, of which The Barn Equine Surgery is a member, offers free lab testing should you think your horse may have flu. You just pay for the visit and any examination or treatment fees.

Advice:

For further information contact the surgery to speak directly with one of our vets on 01202 823512

RCVS ACCREDITED PRACTICE

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